

Jordan's political, economic and cultural weekly

The Star
Jordan's political, economic and cultural weekly

Presents its best wishes to His Majesty King Hussein and the Jordanian people on the occasion of Independence Day

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Charges of selling land to Jews turns deadly

By Barton Gellman

EIN YABROUD, West Bank—Hani Abu Sarah, 49, a small-time building contractor here, set off for a business meeting Saturday and did not return. His body turned up in an olive grove, finished off with a gunshot in the ear.

On Monday, Palestinian news reports linked the killing to suspicions that Abu Sarah once helped sell Arab land to Jews, an act that has long smacked of heresy and treason in the struggle between dueling national claims.

It was the second time this month a man has died in the shadow of a charge of selling land to Jews.

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, speaking to reporters in parliament Monday, described the killings as "ghastly, monstrous." He said Abu Sarah's shooting, along with another on May 9, was "apparently at the behest of the Palestinian Authority."

Neither he nor aides provided support for that charge, and Israeli police and defense spokesmen said they have no evidence to back it.

A closer look at Abu Sarah's life and death left it doubtful he ever sold land to Jews, or lost his life because someone thought he had.

Neighbors, Palestinian police, the local mosque preacher and two sons mourning in the shade of a fig tree offered an abundance of alternate explanations in Abu Sarah's tangled personal history, including business disputes, allegations of infidelity to his two wives and a role in a previously murderous family feud.

But there is little doubt about the return of a lethal argument over land sales in the context of what US ambassador Martin Indyk described over the weekend as a "broken down" effort to reach a negotiated peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

A staple of the infotada, the 1987-93 uprising against Israeli military occupation, and a recurring theme since the century began, the issue had largely been dormant since the first Israeli-Palestinian accord of 1993.

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Journalists united in their rejection of new press law

JPA ready to take government to court, but opts to engage in quiet dialogue for now

By Raed Al Abed

Star Staff Writer

After more than four years of tension between successive governments and the Arabic weekly press, the government of Dr Abdel Salam Majali has finally carried out what previous government had threatened to do but never did: amend the Press and Publication Law, UNOL last week the government could only file legal suits against newspapers. But under the amended law, the government has rearmored itself again with painful and sometimes lethal weapons, from back-breaking fines to actual abrogation of licences.

Since the Press and Publication Law was passed by parliament in 1993, the government filed 62 legal cases against editors and their newspapers. Only four were against the dailies and the rest against weekly newspapers. It won some and lost many.

But last Saturday, the government got the Royal stamp of approval for amendments to the 1993 Press and Publication Law. The new temporary law gives the government greater control over newspapers and the other 542 publications in the country. (See page 2).

The Jordan Press Association (JPA) and all professional unions and opposition parties rejected the government's surprising move and accused it of exploiting the absence of Parliament to dramatically impose restrictions on the press.

The new law sparked widespread reaction especially from the professional sectors in Jordan. Opponents accused the government of muzzling the press and of retreating from the democratic path.

The government's move followed harsh criticisms by His Majesty King Hussein of sensational and irresponsible press. They were in turn being accused of undermining national stability, by publishing sensational stories that lack credibility and professionalism.

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Closing ranks: JPA members ponder their next move

However, many believe that the new law is a form of "collective punishment" against the press in Jordan which will transform the country's press into a mouthpiece for the government.

"This is a conservative, traditional society that is not accustomed to read such [sensational] material in its local newspapers," said Mr Mahmoud Al Sharif, a former minister of information. "Besides, some of these weeklies have actually smeared the image of Jordan abroad."

Mr Sharif believes that the causes behind the new law are understandable, but "the way it was implemented is highly controversial," adding that "in many aspects it is curbing the freedom of the press, of the mainstream press, of the loyal patriotic press." He maintained that "you are punishing all the press because of the deviation of the few."

The new amendments are too harsh for dealing with these deviations," Mr Sharif pointed out. Article 24/B of the law now compels weekly newspapers to raise their capital from the present JD 15000 to a massive JD 300,000. They must comply with the law within three months or face closure. Such a provision is considered by many observers as a form of collective punishment that reduces the "good" press to the

level of the bad.

"It means you are driving all the weeklies out of the market. Nobody can pay this amount. If that is the intention I think it is wrong," Mr Sharif said. "Take for example The Star itself, which is a very useful magazine that carries news about Jordan abroad. The Star is doing the job of the embassies." The former minister said that it shouldn't be punished like the rest of the sensational newspapers.

The press body criticized the law for setting high fines on journalists for "ambiguous offences" which is leaving it to the executive branch to interpret.

"This will serve as a permanent threat to journalists in carrying out their duties. They are now terrorized by this new law," said Mr Sharif.

Legal experts have also accused the new law of being unconstitutional. "This law violates article 94/1 of the Constitution," Jordan's Lawyers Association President Hussein Mjalli said.

The Constitution states that a temporary law may only be passed in specific cases "concerning matters which require necessary measures which admit of no delay or which necessitate expedient and capable of postponement."

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ernment could have waited until parliament convenes.

He added that even if the new law requires "necessary measures" the Constitution stated in article 82/1 that the King may whenever necessary summon Parliament to meet in an extraordinary session for an unspecified period for the purpose of deciding matters to be specified in the Royal Decree when the summons are issued.

"Accordingly this law is invalid and violates the Constitution," Mjalli added.

Lawyer Saleem Al Zo'bi who participated in drawing the Press and Publication Law in 1993, agreed with Mjalli's legal view. He expressed his concern about the phenomenon of temporary laws that successive governments have implemented in the past. He believes that "such actions are depleting the authority of the legislative branch."

Mr Sharif reiterated his call for forming a Higher Press Council which is composed of influential people that will control "deviations and anti-social behavior" within the press body and assume that role so that it will not be filled by the "executive branch of government."

Meanwhile, the JPA has contained a minor crisis among its council members who have now agreed to suspend their resignations. JPA President Saif Al

Turning Aqaba into a free zone could prove an expensive task, experts argue

By Ihram Sadeq

Star Staff Writer

THE MAIN focus of the government's economic agenda during last week's meetings of the ministerial development committee was given to plans being disclosed to transform Aqaba into a free trade zone and link the Dead Sea with the Red Sea. Official figures estimate the total costs of the two projects at \$7million.

During a press conference earlier last week, Jawad Al Anani, deputy prime minister for development and minister of state for prime ministry affairs, told journalists that "I believe that transforming Aqaba into a free zone will be of a great benefit to Jordan," and added that this was an old project that has been widely discussed by former governments. However Dr Al Anani, stressed that the project has now been finally approved and will take its way towards implementation.

According to Anani the Aqaba project which costs \$3 million, provides the infrastructure needed for a free trade zone including railways, tourism and industrial areas, water, electricity, environmental projects and a replanning of the city. This project will take nine years to be completed, with the aim of making Aqaba a promising investment zone for the whole region.

However, the viewpoint of Dr Fahd Al Fanek, a prominent economist is completely different. "The project is too big for Jordan," he told The Star.

He added that estimates for such projects (the Aqaba free zone and the two seas' canal linking the Red Sea and the Dead Sea) are exaggerated and are not based on accurate feasibility studies, Al Fanek said.

Ahmed Al Nimri, an economic analyst, agrees with Al Fanek. He added that our economic performance is below expectations now and that with the present philosophy towards liberalizing prices we should not be focusing our attention on impractical projects that need huge financing.

"Aqaba is already a semi-free zone where we can attract investments and encourage the exchange and re-export of goods," Al Nimri told The Star. "This can be achieved without speaking about a free zone that costs billions of dollars."

Dr Al Fanek believes taking on such projects will easily double Jordan's foreign

debts, currently fixed at around \$6 billion. He wonders how Jordan will be able to service an additional increase in debts.

But, Dr Al Anani said that by 1998, Jordan would not need to follow an economic restructuring program. This means that by that time Jordan would have been able to reach a state where it will be fully capable of managing its economy on sound basis and become a more competitive society, Dr Al Anani said.

Dr Al Anani said. He also added that Jordan had managed to reduce its budget deficit to the gross domestic output (GDP) and increased its exports and moved on successfully towards an effective privatization strategy to give a leading role to the private sector. In addition the country has a satisfactory reserve of foreign currencies.

A three-year agreement was concluded in 1994 between Jordan and the Paris Club of creditors to reschedule Jordanian debts that are worth \$1.2 billion. These debts were due next June, but according to

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Military prosecutor charges Dakamseh with premeditated murder

AMMAN (Star)—The general military prosecutor has formally indicted private Ahmad Mousa Dakamseh, 26, and charged him with premeditated murder under the Penal Code. The indictment sheet consisted of three other charges including attempted murder and disobeying military orders.

Dakamseh, a resident of Irbid village near Irbid, has been in military custody ever since he was arrested following a bloody attack on Israeli school girls on 13 March in the Baqura area which left seven dead and, as many injured.

Dakamseh was serving as a driver of a military vehicle in the Jordan Valley area when the attack took place. He is now accused of planning and carrying out the attack on his own.

According to the indictment sheet, Dakamseh had planned to kill Israelis as far back as 1993, when he was transferred to the Jordan Valley area to serve there. But he was never able to execute a plan to cross the Jordan River and attack Israeli patrols.

When he was relocated to Baqura, he decided to attack visiting Israeli tourists who frequented that area, the indictment sheet said.

It added that he planned to gun down Israelis visiting the Baqura area early in March and almost carried out his scheme on 7 March.

On the night of 12 March he was on duty and refused to be substituted on the morning of 13 March but took leave for one hour and returned with a gun and seven loaded magazines.

At about 10 am, a bus carrying Israeli children arrived and remained there for 15 minutes. According to the

military prosecutor, Dakamseh did not carry out his attack because of the young age of the children.

Later on another bus arrived carrying about 50 Israeli schoolgirls, aged between 12 and 14, who disembarked not very far from where the military vehicle was standing. He allegedly made sexual remarks about one of the girls and asked a sergeant who was with him in the car to leave him alone for

a while. He then loaded his gun and moved to about 30 meters from the girls and began shooting indiscriminately at their backs killing and injuring several of them.

The prosecutor said Dakamseh changed magazines several times and continued shooting and advancing until he was five meters away from his victims. Members of his unit tried to restrain him but

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Queen Margrethe a Danish delight

By Dean E. Murphy

COPENHAGEN, Denmark—Danish Queen Margrethe II set sail last week for a cruise through her crannied Nordic kingdom. But Danes don't expect to hear much about the weeklong royal outing. The queen, you see, is rarely big news here.

As head of one of the world's oldest reigning monarchies—dating back 52 sovereigns to Viking ruler Gorm the Old in the 10th century—Queen Margrethe carries impeccable regal credentials. She lives in a Rococo palace in the heart of the capital, Copenhagen, spends summer holidays at a chateau in France and serves as the titular head of the Danish state.

But as Queen Margrethe celebrates her 25th jubilee this year, Danes say she is most revered for what she is not.

"She is not Queen Elizabeth," said sales clerk Nina Korsbom, speaking of the monarch's higher profile relation across the North Sea. "We like it that way. She is one of us. She's not someone who acts superior or detached."

So ordinary can be Queen Margrethe that she sometimes does her own shopping, traipsing home to Amalienborg Palace with purchases under her arm. She is an accomplished artist who has been known to work for her stipend, designing sets at the Royal Theater, illustrating works by J.R.R. Tolkien and

translating a book by French philosopher Simone de Beauvoir.

The no-nonsense monarch offers no apologies for the cigarette that dangles perpetually from her lip, and her annual New Year's address typically includes a blunt admonishment of her 5.2 million subjects—most recently, for the country's growing intolerance of immigrants.

"She is one of those rare people who is able to speak to the conscience of a nation," said Hans Jorgen Nielsen, a political scientist at Copenhagen University. "Even the left-wing (anti-monarchist) listen to her. She has consistently enjoyed a favorable rating of 80 percent to 90 percent."

The festivities marking her silver anniversary—a milestone similar to one that lurched the British royal

house into a public tizzy in 1977—have been adoring but restrained. There has been a state banquet in Parliament, a ceremonial carriage tour of the capital and a special performance of the Royal Ballet.

Last week's royal cruise is one of several official outings planned in Denmark and its possessions, including Greenland and the Faroe Islands.

But tourist shops in Copenhagen report that jubilee and other royal souvenirs are a hard sell, especially when compared with trinkets depicting this city's legendary mermaid or renowned storyteller, Hans Christian Andersen.

Danish royal watchers say the low-key relationship between ruler and ruled has helped build the monarchy's popularity. There is an unspoken axiom in Denmark that the six members of the royal family do not abuse

their privileges, and, in exchange, the public keeps a respectful distance.

In the most notable example, royal watchers say, it is well-known that Crown Prince Frederik, 28, invites girlfriends to spend the night at the royal residence. But he does not flaunt such trysts, nor are they typically noted outside gossip columns.

"We all think he has a right to live his own life and meet the girls he wants to meet. We treat the royal family as a normal family—we couldn't have it any other way in Denmark," said Annelise Weimann of Billet Bladet, a weekly magazine.

That is not to say Danes are indifferent about their monarchy. Several months ago, a Swedish newspaper journalist scolded Queen Margrethe for

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On the Occasion of INDEPENDENCE DAY

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هكذا من الأصل

Restrictions on press freedom do not stop with new law

Other laws such as the Penal Code exist to curb freedom of expression

AMMAN (Star)—Amendments to the 1993 Press and Publications Law were ratified by a Royal Decree, last Saturday.

Article 24/A orders daily newspapers to increase capital from JD 50,000 to JD 600,000. Section B of same article orders other publications and weeklies to increase their capital from JD 15,000 to JD 300,000. Both must do so within three months.

Article 13/B requires chief editors to have at least 10 years experience.

Amendments ended the daily's hope of reducing government control. They cancelled the article to vest the government of its equity in *Ad-Dustour* and *Al-Rai*.

The new law allows the government to maintain, through the Social Security Corp., and the Jordan Investment Corp., a controlling interest of 62 percent in *Al-Rai* and 32 percent equity in *Ad-Dustour*.

Law now cancels imprisonment for violations. Article 50/H gives courts the right to cease any newspaper that is convicted of violating Articles 40 and 42, and gives [informa-

tion] minister the right to allow the republication after paying the fines.

Fines and offences under Articles 40 and 42 (publishing of pending court proceedings) which originally did not exceed JD 1,000, and fines for offences under Article 44 did not exceed JD 6,000.

Amendments concerning these articles now have a minimum fine of JD 15,000 and a maximum of JD 25,000.

Article 40 of the Press and Publications Law forbids publication of news, views, opinions, analysis, information, reports, caricatures, photos or any sort that disparages any of the following:

■ Which offends the King and the Royal Family;

■ Information about the Jordanian Armed Forces and security forces, unless it is permitted either by the concerned authority or by a government official;

■ Materials which show contempt for any religion recognized by the Constitution;

■ Articles which damage national unity, or encourage racism, or foment hatred, discord and disharmony among

members of society;

■ Government documents of a confidential nature;

■ Minutes of closed sessions of Parliament;

■ Information which is intended to shake confidence in the national currency;

■ Information which contains a personal insult to the Heads of State of Arab, Islamic or friendly countries or that harms Jordanian relations with other countries;

■ Which offend the dignity or personal freedoms of individuals or damage their reputation;

■ Which are contrary to public morals and ethics;

■ Which includes false news or rumors that offend public interests or state departments.

Other laws that restrict the freedom of the press:

■ The Penal Code contains additional provisions which restrict freedom of expression and carry harsh penalties.

■ External Security of the State.

Article 118 of the Code protects the external security of the

state by punishing with imprisonment for at least five years, "anyone who, by writing or speech not authorized by the government, exposes the Kingdom to the danger of hostile actions, disturbs its relations with foreign states, or exposes Jordanians to physical or material retaliation." "Anyone who provokes incitement within the Kingdom, or any Jordanian who provokes incitement inside or outside the Kingdom by writing or speech may be sentenced to a prison term not exceeding two years and a fine of no more than JD 30" (Article 122). The definition of incitement includes humiliation of a foreign country, its dignity, its flag, or its national anthem. Article 122 also prohibits the insult or humiliation of a head of state, its ministers, or its political representatives in the Kingdom and specifies that truth is not a defence to charges under this provision.

■ Dissemination of false news.

The deliberate dissemination of false or exaggerated information outside the country which attacks state dignity may be punished with a prison sen-

tence of not less than six months and a fine of not more than JD 50. If the false or exaggerated news concerns the King, his successor, or the guardian of the throne, he or she may be sentenced to no less than one year's imprisonment (Article 132).

■ Defamation, Innuendo and Affronts against Public Officials.

The Penal Code defines defamation as "the imputation of a specific fault to a person, in a sceptical or interrogative manner, in such a way as to detract from his honour and dignity or expose him to hatred and contempt, regardless of whether the said fault constitutes a punishable offence" (Article 188).

Innuendo is defined as "an attack on the dignity, honour or standing of another person, in a sceptical or interrogative manner, without specifying a particular fault" (Article 189). An affront is "any contemptuous insinuation or invective, other than defamation and innuendo, which is directed against the victim by word of mouth in his presence, by way of abuse, in writing or graphic form that is not made public, in

a telegraphic or telephone communication or by callous treatment" (Article 190).

Public officials are entitled to enhanced protection under the Code. Defamation is "punishable by imprisonment for a term of three months to two years if it is directed against the National Assembly (Parliament) or its members in the course of their work, or if it is directed against an official body, a court of law, a public institution, the army or any public servant in the discharge of his functions or as a result of action taken by virtue thereof" (Article 191). Innuendo is "punishable by imprisonment for a term of one to six months or a fine of JD 10-50 if it is directed against any of the bodies or persons mentioned in Article 191" (Article 193). Affront is "punishable by imprisonment for a term of two weeks in six months and/or a fine of JD 5-30 if it is directed against a public servant in the discharge of his functions or as a result of action taken in his official capacity."

If the public servant is a person "vested with public authority," the penalty is enhanced and the perpetrator may be imprisoned for up to one year (Article 196).

The Law on State Secrets and Classified Documents

The Law on State Secrets and Classified Documents prohibits civil servants from making public any classified information under four categories: "ordinary," "restricted," "secret" and "top secret."

A letter from the publisher

JORDANIAN JOURNALISTS have rejected the new press and publication law passed unilaterally by the government earlier this week. The Council of the Press Association has submitted its resignation, but later suspended it, in protest and the heads of other professional unions have also threatened to resign en masse by Saturday if the government does not withdraw its controversial law.

Opposition parties have also come out to denounce the amendments introduced by the government to the 1993 law, which until last week, was seen as the most liberal press law in the Arab world and an indication of Jordan's vibrant democratic process introduced in the early 1990s.

Apart from the numerous flaws in the new law, which are seen as a major setback to freedom of expression in Jordan, the manner with which the government has passed the law, without consulting the Press Association or the deputies, reflects a drastic retreat by the government from the democratic process.

Such a process enshrines the basic fundamentals of freedom of expression as a constitutional right for every Jordanian, pluralism and the separation of powers.

Such a change in government mentality is sending the wrong signal to Jordanians and to the world.

The press has come under fire in recent weeks for its treatment of many issues; from national unity to peace with Israel, and from the economic woes of the country to official corruption. In addition to this some newspapers, especially among the Arabic weeklies, have been accused, justly on many occasions, for their irresponsible, sensational and non-credible coverage of public issues. It is no secret that the main casualty of the new law will be the weekly press. Most may have their licences revoked.

While the government may have a case against the way some tabloids have abused their freedom under the 1993 law, the government's choice of remedy is unjustified and will do more harm than good to press freedom and to the image of Jordan as a beacon of democracy in this region.

The new law has condemned all Jordanian journalists—the majority of whom are bound by the ethics and principles of their profession. It has dealt a blow to all members of the profession regardless of their credibility and intentions. It has confiscated their right to report freely and responsibly on government—a most sacred tenet in any thriving and healthy democracy.

This paper is among Jordan's oldest weeklies. Being a weekly newspaper it now finds itself threatened by the new law, which requires us to re-register itself as JD 300,000 establishment. We were never considered, nor do we consider ourselves, as a sensational and irresponsible newspaper that has abused its freedom. And yet the new law has passed a heavy sentence on us.

There is much more at stake here than closing down a few rogue weeklies. Silencing the weeklies, *The Star* included, will not serve democracy, nor will it advance and protect freedom of the press in Jordan.

We have always believed in responsible dialogue and in the sanctity of our constitution and laws. Both are now being undermined by arbitrary legislation and political myopia.

Turning Aqaba into a free zone could prove an expensive task, experts argue

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the agreement repayment was delayed to June 2000.

Lately, the United States had disclosed that it plans to offer loans to Jordan worth \$100 million, however no further details were available on the utilization of these loans.

Since the last Amman Economic Summit (MENA), Jordanians have been anticipating concrete steps to carry out some of the big infrastructural projects that were discussed. But until last week none of

the projects was implemented.

The head of the Aqaba municipality, Dr Riyadh Al Hilu described the decision to transform Aqaba into a free zone as positive. However, he added that this puts us in real competition with neighboring countries in the fields of transport, tourism and investments. "We should be strong and qualified enough to face such a competition," he said.

He added that to develop Aqaba along the lines of the free zones of Port Said in

Egypt and Jebel Ali in Dubai requires careful and serious planning, bearing in mind the various economic, geographic and demographic aspects. "This means that a sound infrastructure should be there and investors have to be provided with all facilities and incentives to choose Aqaba as a center for their business and trade," Al Hilu said.

The transformation of Aqaba into a free zone is an ambitious project that will certainly encourage industrial exports, create employment opportunities, reduce pressure on the balance of payment, help transfer advanced technology, and revive the national economy. The project should boost the tourism sector, attract foreign investments and facilitate regional cooperation in various fields of development.

However, financing this huge project remains the problem.

Military prosecutor charges Dakamseh with premeditated murder

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he allegedly threatened them with his gun and proceeded to shoot at the girls until his gun jammed and his colleagues were able to control him. He was taken to a control tower but while members of the unit were busy evacuating the victims he managed to escape and commandeered a military vehicle and headed for the attack site and tried to run down an Israeli man who was injured in his leg. He was finally restrained.

Now that the indictment sheet has been presented, a trial date will be set, expected to take place as soon as next week. If convicted Dakamseh faces the death penalty. His lawyer Ahmad Najdawi has asked Arab lawyers to join him in the defense of his client. The defense will insist that this was not premeditated

and will try to prove that Dakamseh had not planned the attack but was provoked by his victims and acted at the spur of the moment.

Charges of selling land

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From the earliest days of Zionism, when Jews and Arabs began their contest for the lands of Palestine, both sides infused private ownership of land with religious resonance and implications of national sovereignty.

Zionist purchases were known as "redeeming the land," and "there was a consensus that land, once bought, should not pass from Jewish to Arab hands," said Anita Shapira, professor of Zionism at Tel Aviv University.

Better organized and financed, ultimately triumphant in founding their state, the Zionists devised formal and informal mechanisms to prevent Arabs from acquiring Jewish land that persist today.

Palestinians, the weaker party, turned to violence. A 1994 study of Palestinian slayings of collaborators with Israel by the human rights group B'tselem found that land dealers were thought to be "the worst type," "heretics and religious rebels."

The return of the issue in Palestinian debate began with the groundbreaking in March for a new Jewish neighborhood in East Jerusalem on land bought years ago from Arabs by Jews.

Another factor was a series of covert land deals by extremist Jewish groups, culminating in the expansion this month of the Merkaz Harav yeshiva—a messianic bulwark of the settler

movement whose patron advocates expulsion of Arabs from the West Bank—on East Jerusalem's Mount of Olives.

The Palestinian cabinet, meeting May 2, directed "judicial and security circles" to halt such land sales. Three days later, Justice Minister Fehi Abu Medeen said the self-rule authority would put "anyone who sells even a centimeter on swift trial and ... seek the death penalty against them."

He spoke approvingly of occasions in the infidels when "people who sold land to Israelis were shot as traitors."

That is approximately what appeared to happen next. Farid Bashiti, 70, an East Jerusalem land dealer widely reputed to be a broker for Jewish land purchases from Arabs, was found bludgeoned to death on May 9 in Palestinian-ruled Ramallah, his hands bound behind him. Israeli police alleged he was lured there by a young woman working for the Palestinian Authority and killed by Palestinian police lawyer Nasser Anani, both of whom are in Israeli custody with their cases under seal, a common Israeli practice.

After Bashiti's body was found, Abu Medeen continued to make what Human Rights Watch/Middle East, in a letter to Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, described as "outrageous statements" that appeared to condone "outright murder" of land dealers.

Journalists united

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Sharif said the general assembly of the JPA will be called for an extraordinary meeting on 6 June to discuss the new law which was passed without prior consultation with his association. He also said the JPA has managed to convince presidents of other professional unions to suspend their decision to resign on Saturday if the government does not withdraw the new law.

JPA has now opted to establish a quiet dialogue with the government rather than resort to extreme measures. It hopes to convince the government to review some of the amended articles which journalists find undemocratic and threatening to press freedom. JPA will also file a legal suit against the new law at the Higher Court of Justice.

JPA's decision to open dialogue came one day after a peaceful sit-in in front of the Prime Ministry ended in violence with riot police using force to disperse some 60 Jordanian journalists. At least four were injured and 10 were arrested. They were later released.

The government announced Tuesday that it had no intention to withdraw the law. Minister of State for Information Affairs Dr Samir Mutawa said only an elected parliament can approve or reject the law. He said no special session of parliament will be called before the November elections.

"No one knows where he is buried," Mohammed Bashiti, the dead man's son, said Monday. "I want my father to rest in peace."

Here in Ein Yabroud, a Ramallah suburb 12 miles north of Jerusalem, Abu Sarah, the more recent casualty, was buried with Koranic verse in a village graveyard packed with neighbors and friends. That was a strong indication of disbelief in allegations raised in the newspaper al-Ayyam that the dead man had been suspected of "selling lands to Israelis."

"There isn't any evidence," said Sheikh Munir Nabulsi, who heads the Ein Yabroud mosque and presided over the funeral. "It is very possible that this man was falsely accused." On the other hand, Nabulsi said, "if they find he really was guilty of selling land, whoever killed him will not be found because he will (turn out to) be from the Authority."

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INVITATION for Pre-qualification of Vendors for Corporate Planning and Computerization Project Tender No. 23/F97

Jordan Phosphate Mines Co. Ltd. (JPMC) invites local and/or international companies specialized in the computer industry to apply for Pre-qualification to implement the Corporate Planning and Computerization Project at JPMC Head Quarters and all other Sites. Application for Pre-qualification will be considered only for specialized computer companies, which are suitably qualified for this type of work and with high knowledge in Management Information System (MIS).

The pre-qualification document submitted shall include details of experience and past performances on similar projects, the capability of the vendor and with respect to personnel and financial position. Application for Pre-qualification will be issued against non-refundable payment of JD300 and will be available at JPMC Head Quarters / Supply Department. The closing date for purchasing the Pre-qualification document is 12:00 HRS local time Thursday the 5th of June 1997.

A presentation will be conducted at JPMC Head Quarters in Amman at 10:00 HRS Local Time Monday the 9th of June 1997, to answer all queries regarding the Pre-qualification document.

The closing date for submission of applications is 12:00 HRS Local time Thursday 26th of June 1997.

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report on Jordanian
news and views edited
by Marwan Al Asmar



King accepts credentials of foreign ambassadors to Jordan

His Majesty King Hussein accepted the credentials of the new British ambassador to Jordan, Mr Christopher Battiscombe, on Tuesday.

Mr Battiscombe began his diplomatic career in 1963. He served as counsellor in Cairo from 1981 to '84; ambassador to Algeria from 1990 to '94; and assistant undersecretary, director of public services at British Foreign Office until 1997.

Mr Battiscombe said that he was delighted to be in Jordan during such an important time in the history of the region. The ambassadors of Spain, Norway and Ecuador also presented their credentials to the King.

Jordanians in Iranian jails

The families of the 15 Jordanians held in an Iranian jail are making another appeal to the government and human rights organizations to intervene on their behalf. The families have said that already a number of Arab and foreign prisoners have been set free and that Jordanian prisoners should get the same treatment. Their families point out that some of the prisoners have been held for the last 15 years. Iranian sources told *Ad Dustour* that most of the Jordanian prisoners are military men who participated in the Al Humra and Al Shooah battles in the last Iran-Iraq war. However, it seems that negotiations are still with the Iranian government is taking place to release them.

Abu Awad stands for NCP

The National Constitutional Party is now busy gearing up for the next general election in November. It has already added to its list the famous comic actor, Nabil Al Mashini, alias Abu Awad. He will be standing for a Christian seat in the Third District.

On another level, Lower House deputy, Mohammad Dawoudia is applying for membership to join the newly formed party. Dawoudia, who was a minister of youth in the last Kafarid government, is a strange cattle of fish. In the early 90s he was a member of the now merged Arab Democratic Party, but it appears now that he is once again making a full circle to his life and joining a center right party.

What is more interesting is that the Minister of State for Information Affairs, Samir Mutaweh is also joining the new party. The NCP is already fielding 50 candidates for the next election. This is more than the 41 candidates that is being fielded by the Islamic Action Front.

Food poisoning

About 60 school girls were taken to Al Mafrag government hospital suffering from food poisoning. It is thought that they became sick after eating canned cheese that has been donated by a European country, according to *Al Arab Al Youm*. Meanwhile, 70 students in a public school in Al Wihdat were taken ill because of food poisoning. Medical reports suggest the poisoning happened after the pupils ate sandwiches from the school cafeteria. According to *Al Bilad*, Al Besbir Hospital turned away the sick children. As a result, some went to the Islamic Hospital. However, the weekly points out that some of the children stayed at home because their parents could not afford private hospital treatment.

Code of honor

A new 'code of honor' has been drawn up by the General Secretariat of the Arab Parties Conference. General Secretary Sulaiman Arar said the new code, which was about producing a set of 'blueprints', will be presented to the next conference of the Arab political parties. In what is seen as a reminder of a pan-Arab philosophy, Mr Arar said the new code will help establish a move from the present regionalism of the Arab world to a 'wholistic' view. And in that respect, Mr Arar said that occupation of any one part of the Arab world is to be rejected. He said the charter includes an article for the removal of sanctions on Iraq, Sudan and Libya. Arab political parties would be expected to work for the removal of these sanctions. The charter stated that the Palestinian question is central to the Arab cause and that liberation of the south of Lebanon and the Golan Heights was a must.

Palestine remembered

A student rally in memory of the loss of Palestine to May 1948 took place earlier this week in the University of Jordan. Speakers called for the stopping of any form of normalization with Israel. The peaceful protest was allowed to go ahead by the university administration. Similarly, the Professional Associations held a rally to commemorate that occasion. Speakers included Hamas leader Abdel Aziz Al Rantisi, who delivered a message by telephone from Gaza, the Overseer of the Muslim Brotherhood, Abdel Majed Thuneibat, the former Mayor of Nablus, Bassam Al Shaka', Lower House deputy Bassam Al Omush, and the President of the Lawyers Association Hussein Mjalli. The rally was organized by the Palestine Committee and Committee to Resist Normalization of the Professional Associations.

Al Arab Al Youm

Jordan this week saw the birth of a new daily, *Al Arab Al Youm* is proving to be an interesting addition to the other three dailies that exist in Jordan. Will it be a strong competitor many are arguing? For this we shall have to wait and see in the coming few months. Certainly so far *Al Arab Al Youm* has not proved the dynamic, magical, news earth-shattering newspaper that we were led to believe in the months prior to publication. Very little analysis, scant features and almost mundane news have dominated the first few days of publication. However, one must not be too harsh to an up and coming daily. In all fairness, *Al Arab Al Youm* has potential. The new simplistic style it is introducing to the press scene could be a welcome change from the large headlines that has become to dominate our daily diet.

A Middle East expert speaking on a greater EU role in peace process says

'Europe is going to be very careful not to offend the United States...'

EDITOR'S NOTE: More experts are talking about a greater European role in the Middle East. They say that Europe wants to become closer to the Mediterranean countries and forge relations based on stronger political, security economic and cultural cooperation. *The Star's* Marwan Asmar talked to Dr Tim Niblock, the director of the Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies Center of Durham University in Britain, about this development. Dr Niblock was recently in Jordan. Excerpts follow:

How do you feel about the present peace process? Is it facing deadlock, or is this a temporary hitch that will be overcome?

I think at the moment it is in a very serious situation and I don't think that with the present Israeli government it is likely to proceed very significantly. Nonetheless, in view of everything that happened, in view of the involvement of outside powers in the various agreements that have been made, I don't think that these peace agreements could be undone. The Palestinian National Authority is there to stay and that structure is there to stay, but for the moment I find it very difficult to imagine it's moving on to a final status solution in the near future.

Do you think that Europe can play a greater role in "unblocking" it in that regard?

I believe that the European Union should play a big part than before in the peace process and there is a very hopeful sign that, now, we do have a European Union negotiator on the Arab-Israeli question. At the moment, I think, the European Union is going to be very careful not to offend the United States, and not to do something which runs counter to American interests. For as long as that is the case, the value of the European Union's role may be limited. But I would think that in the rather longer term perhaps, may be, the European Union's role may become a little more independent.

Europe is trying to get into the area through other ways: through political, security, economic means as well as by building association agreements with the countries of the region. Do you think that Europe now has the political will to do that after so many years of dithering—nothing came out of the Venice Declaration, for instance?

On the economic side the European Union has shown fairly clearly that it wants much closer involvement in the



Niblock

region than before. It's in the European Union economic interests to do so, and it's also in the Union's rather longer term security interests to ensure that there is a region of peace and stability in the Mediterranean region. There is something more substantial than before, but I think that it is unlikely to be felt on the Arab-Israeli questions in the near future.

May be Europe does not want to offend the USA, but all the indications point out that Europe is a growing homogeneous power and so some argue it would like to follow a "muscle-flexing" strategy were it wants to play a greater role in the international arena. Do you think this is what's happening?

I personally believe that it is time for that. And I think that there is a logic to developments which would lead to that direction—the process of European, political and economic integration. The European Union is going to be playing a more significant role on the international stage that will be more independent of the United States. But that may still take time to develop especially on the Arab-Israeli issue in so far as that is something about which the United States is very sensitive in trying to protect its own role from being undermined by other powers. So I think it may take a few years before the European Union's strength in that field become apparent. And of course, it is true that the European Union economic involvement and its general social and cultural

involvement in the Middle East is much greater than that of the United States.

You stated before that the new relationship between Europe and the Mediterranean and Arab countries is a two-way street in that the influence has to come from both directions. And in that respect the Arab countries have to pull their socks up, cooperate more with each other to have greater influence on the Europeans. Can you specify what you mean?

At the moment in the relationship between the EU and Arab countries, the European Union is dealing with them at one level as part of the whole Middle East including Israel, and on the other hand it is dealing with them individually, through the individual association agreements. This structure of the relationship is something which emphasizes European strength and Arab weakness, Arab division. If the relationship is going to be more beneficial for the Arab countries, there needs to be a greater degree of coordination and unified action on the Arab side. The European Union, if it is to go in a positive direction as far as the Arab world is concerned, does need to have its policy pushed and I think this can be done by Arab countries collectively, or perhaps by groupings of Arab countries, acting together, or through Arab organizations.

In view of the present state of the Arab world, do you think this is feasible?

At the moment one is aware of division and that even some of the organizations which seemed to bring countries together like the Arab Maghreb Union or the Arab League are weaker than they have been at times in the past. But I do also sense, within the Arab world, a lot of evidence that there is a widespread realization of the weaknesses which have followed from this disunity and a widespread desire to try and overcome that kind of vision, and I noticed that there are significant attempts being made to try to revive the importance of the Arab League for example, and I see this as a positive move. So I think, one is at the stage of division, but there does seem to be a spreading consciousness of the need for a more need for a unified coordinated action.

To what degree has European perceptions of the Arab and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict changed from say 10 to 15 years ago? What about the worn out stereotyping, do they still exist?

If one looks at a slightly longer period, say 25 years back, then one has seen a substantial change in European perceptions of the Arab world

and the Palestinian conflict. That goes through different phases. Going through 1990/91, there was a steady increase in understanding in European countries of the nature of the problem in Palestine. That understanding reached its heights at the time of the Intifada. It made a tremendous impact on European opinion and it brought home to Europeans, very directly and very crucially, what the Palestine issue was all about because they saw it day by day or evening by evening on their television screens, and it meant something very much to them. And over those years one had a lot of books being written which reached public opinion and created a better understanding.

In the years since 1990, one has had a more complex picture of European public opinion. The Gulf War did a certain amount of damage as far as European perceptions of the Middle East and of Palestine; and just at the moment European public opinion is becoming aware of some of the human rights abuses which are taking place under the Palestine National Authority. [through] newspapers, and this is doing some damage to

perceptions.

Will Britain under Tony Blair and Labour be different from Britain under the conservatives with regard to the Middle East?

I think they will be a difference in policy, one of the main points here does not relate as much to Tony Blair as Prime Minister but to Robin Cook as foreign secretary who is a man that does have an understanding of the problems of the Middle East and the Arab-Israeli conflict, who has visited Arab countries and made some effort to try to understand the viewpoints in the area. I think there may also be a difference because the new British government may see an advantage with regard to the European Union and its role in the European Union, an advantage to Britain taking a prominent role in trying to bring forward European Union policy over the Middle East and the Mediterranean. So, I personally believe that British policy in the region under the new government may be a more outgoing one and may be a bit less tied in to the framework of the United States.



(From left), Ahmed Said Nofal, (Yarmouk), Tim Niblock (Durham), Javad Al Ahmad (MESC), Amin Mashaqba and Mohammad Fayed Isaid (both from Applied Science).

A panel discussion on "European Policies Towards the Middle East in the 21st Century" was organized by the Amman-based Middle East Studies Center and the Jordanian Society for Political Science last week. Dr Niblock (see interview above) from Durham University in the UK, and who had been on a short visit to Jordan, was accompanied by lectures from Yarmouk and the Applied Science universities. MESC Director, Mr Javad Al Ahmad said the seminar comes at a critical stage of building greater relations between Europe and the Arab world. He added that there is a need for the two sides to reformulate policies towards each other in order to build a better future.

Queen Margrethe a Danish delight

Continued from page 1

her unrepentant public smoking, which has even included lighting up at a center for asthmatics.

The Danes reacted with indignation, with one tabloid screaming: "Mind Your Own Business, Sweden!"

To defuse the international incident, an apologetic Swedish newspaper rented an electronic billboard in Copenhagen's main square. "Our readers beg the Queen's pardon," it flashed.

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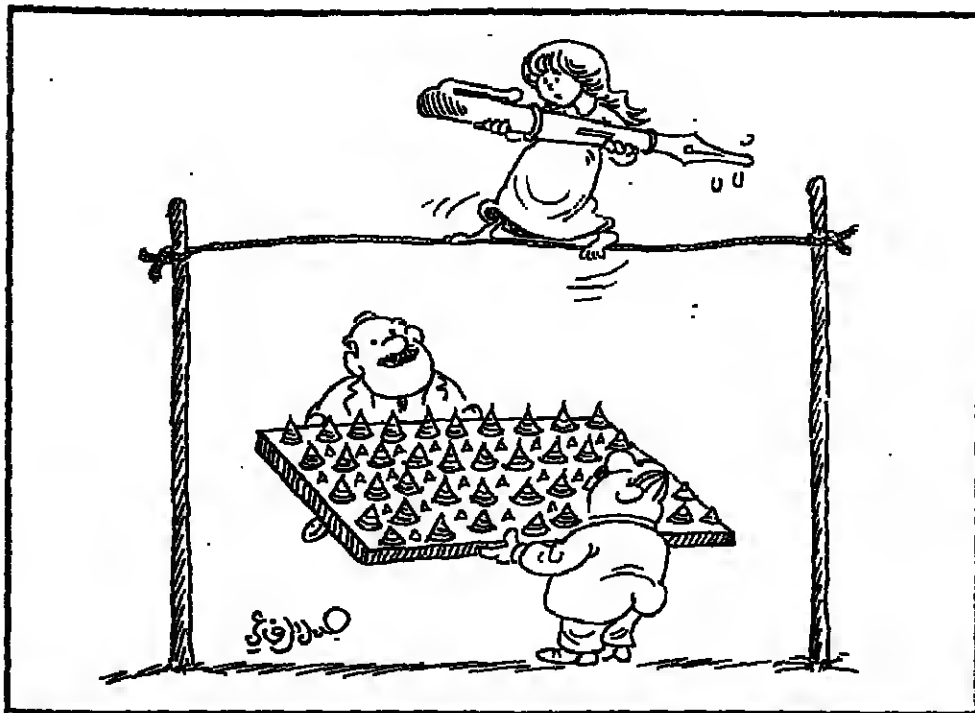
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Our Say...

Deconstructing press freedom

THIS PROMISES to be an unusual summer for Jordanian politics. It is an election year and election years always carry within them the seeds of political evolution—or, God forbid, devolution. With the new press law, passed by the government early this week, the press has been stripped of most of its gains under the democratic era which began in 1989.

It would be an understatement to say that we are now living in one of the lowest points of our youthful democracy. Since the advent of the present government, opposition parties have been warning against a scheme to squeeze them out of the political arena before the November elections. With the press having taken the first blow, it now looks like the political canvass will be weaved all over again before the end of the summer.

It is very difficult to explain to ourselves and to the world around us how we still insist that we are a democracy when an arbitrary law with draconian measures confiscates the right of journalists to freely follow news that might implicate a minister, a whole government or one of its departments. Isn't this what a free press in a democratic society is supposed to be doing? And when journalists try to protest these measures, they are beaten up in front of TV cameras like hooligans.

The government insists that the law will lift the ceiling of freedom to higher limits and assures citizens that the new law actually serves the cause of democracy. Such assurances do not blow away the clouds of confusion and uncertainty that are now hanging over the country. It does nothing to explain the crudeness of the amendments in question, and brushes aside claims that the whole exercise is unconstitutional.

Until last week's notorious amendments, the press law was one of the most important legislations passed by Parliament. It was inspired by the National Charter, which represents the spirit of our democratic rejuvenation. Now we are left wondering about the motives of the government. What does it want to achieve and why has it abandoned earlier promises to consult with people's deputies and debate issues of national importance?

Laws are not eternal. They should be amended and improved upon. But there are traditions that govern such transitions that guarantee stability and continuity. We have now sacrificed these traditions. Today's democracy sounds and feels more like yesterday's martial law era.

It is not the press that we should worry about here, but the spirit of our democracy. Such a spirit should be the bulwark of our political evolution into a state of law and order, of institutions and of political traditions that prevent transgressions, excesses and abuse of power and authority by all concerned.

The press is not above the law. On the contrary. It should make sure that all adhere to it. The government could have waged its battle to reform the press law and end abuse of freedom by a minority of publishers from within the democratic arena. Instead it has committed an unforgivable blunder and set in motion a process that deconstructs the democratic achievements of the past few years. ■

US military seeks new combat plans for 21 Century

The Pentagon's battle doctrines—the rules soldiers learn for fighting wars—still rest fundamentally on notions of massing military might against the kind of sophisticated opposing army that went away with the breakup of the Soviet Union, although each of the military branches is experimenting with new organizational forms and high-tech methods of warfare.

By Bradley Graham

WASHINGTON—In its latest review of how to size and shape US armed forces in the wake of the Soviet Union's collapse, the Pentagon has done some tinkering but left basically intact the military's budget, structure and battle doctrine.

While deciding on another round of cuts in forces, facilities and high-tech hardware purchases, Defense Department officials have spoken essentially of reallocating funds rather than altering defense strategy or revamping major combat units.

The new plan, disclosed last week, has disappointed a number of defense experts who contend that 21st century military challenges will differ from past ones and so require changes now in US organization, weaponry and fighting techniques. Future adversaries, instead of massing tanks and soldiers against American forces—as the Soviet Union threatened during the Cold War, and as Iraq did to little avail during the 1991 Gulf War—likely will fight less conventionally, the experts say.

Plans to keep the defense budget virtually unchanged at about \$250 billion a year also have disturbed both dovish liberals and penny-pinching conservatives in Congress. Their hopes of reducing military expenditures were dashed by the latest agreement between President Clinton and GOP congressional leaders, which makes little change in the total money earmarked for the military.

The Pentagon's response to the critics is that evolutionary rather than revolutionary change must prevail.

"Forgive us for being conservative," said a senior civilian defense official, "but we haven't changed much because much wasn't needed."

As the Clinton administration continues to give top priority to preserving strength and maintaining readiness, Pentagon officials offer several reasons for avoiding sharper turns in course:

■ First, the threat of regional wars breaking out at once in the Arabian Gulf and the Korean peninsula—plus added demands of peacekeeping, humanitarian relief and other noncombat missions—require the United States to sustain a large military undistracted by radical alterations in force structure. Military's plan for future draws heavily

from Cold War past

■ Second, the US military has proven itself the best in the world, so why mess with success?

■ Third, congressional politics pose a real obstacle to certain kinds of substantial reorganization, entailing additional base closings, privatization of defense activities and scrubbing of some jobs-rich weapons programs. While the changes coming out of the Pentagon's Quadrennial Defense Review are modest, they already are drawing protests from some in Congress protective of home-district payrolls.

■ And fourth, President Clinton—who avoided the Vietnam-era draft—is too handicapped in his relations with the military to lead a national effort to restructure it.

With such a cautious approach overall, Pentagon officials have been slow to prepare for less conventional scenarios predicted by many experts. These could involve terrorist attack, electronic sabotage and use of biological or chemical agents, aimed not at confronting the United States head-on but striking at vulnerable points. Winning under such circumstances will require the US military to rely more on stealth, mobility and the dispersion of its forces as well as more timely intelligence and more accurate, longer-range weapons.

"For the contingencies the United States is likely to face, a smaller, agile and more technologically advanced military would serve us best," said Richard Perle, a former Reagan administration Pentagon official now leading a study to define an alternative defense plan. "But instead, there's been a tendency to overestimate the risk of some conflicts and exaggerate the amount of military force needed, resulting in inappropriately large heavy forces that lead to greater vulnerability, not less."

Without a peer in the world or the threat of global war, the American military still does its conventional war-gaming with planning models developed during the Cold War. It remains many of the weapons systems and structures initially designed to deter and combat a long-gone Soviet menace.

The Pentagon's battle doctrines—the rules soldiers learn for fighting wars—still rest fundamentally on notions of massing military might against the kind of sophisticated opposing army that went away with the breakup of the Soviet

Union, although each of the military branches is experimenting with new organizational forms and high-tech methods of warfare.

While the number of US troops based abroad has diminished significantly, about 100,000 will remain in Europe and another 100,000 in Asia under the new plan. And 12 Navy aircraft carriers and 12 Marine Corps amphibious groups will continue adhering to a pattern of regular deployments around the world.

After months of meetings that examined all Pentagon activities and departmental wish lists, the review has ended up reaffirming the case for keeping a large military built around aircraft carriers, combat jets, tanks and other traditional big-ticket weapons. In a report due to be released this month, the Pentagon will reassert its current requirement to grid for fighting two regional wars in close succession, defense officials said.

But the argument this time for maintaining a robust force rests on more than simply the prospect of war in the Gulf or on the Korean peninsula. It says that in order to limit the prospect of conflict erupting in what is still a dangerous and uncertain world, the US military must stay engaged in many peacetime operations—exercises with foreign armies, routine overseas deployments—and be ready to respond to many emergencies short of war.

Up to 60,000 active-duty service members, together with about 70,000 reservists and 80,000 civilian Defense Department employees, will be cut to ensure that planned purchases of new combat aircraft, ships, helicopters and other equipment remain affordable. This will include trims of roughly 10 percent to the Joint Staff and regional command headquarters, officials said. The Pentagon also will seek congressional permission to close more military bases.

At the same time, the number of planned buys—particularly of Air Force F-22 and Navy F/A-18E/F jets and Navy surface ships—will be reduced. Instead of aiming to raise annual procurement from \$42 billion to \$60 billion by 2002, as previously planned, the revised goal will be around \$55 billion, officials said. ■

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

Che Guvera

Rebel with a cause

Che Guevara: A Revolutionary Life, by Jon Lee Anderson. Bantam Press, 814 pages. Reviewed by Simon Strong

THE PHOTOGRAPH of Che Guevara that gave him cult status was taken at a funeral, after a French ship laden with arms exploded in Cuba, killing about 100 people. The dark, unflinching gaze, the tousled hair, the beret and the handsome face made Guevara a student icon whose appeal extended a way beyond the revolutionary Left.

Yet if Guevara had had his way, there would have been a nuclear war in the 1960s. In US journalist Lee Anderson's sweeping biography, one acquaintance describes him as having not a brain in his head, but a machine gun.

It was his early death, and the manner of it, that made him a legend. Aged 39, the upper-middle class Argentine-born doctor who had been second-in-command to Fidel Castro during the Cuban revolution, was shot dead as he lay, sick, in a Bolivian hut after an attempt to create "another Vietnam" in the Andes.

Guevara was executed by a Cuban agent of the CIA whose hatred for him evaporated at his "courage and grace". According to Felix Rodriguez, Guevara's last words were: "I never should have been captured alive...tell Fidel that he will soon see a triumphant revolution in America...and tell my wife to remarry and to try to be happy."

In his life as well as his writings Guevara not only displayed a chilling faith in the use of violence to erase injustice and impose Communism. He also demonstrated an extraordinary capacity for personal self-sacrifice.

Anderson charts how Guevara's ironic detachment from death began as a medical student in Buenos Aires where his first business venture was a chemical to kill cockroaches: the scheme failed.

Although already hostile to the US at a time when the US government supported several right-wing military dictatorships in Latin America, the red-dens of Guevara's political convictions only took place while travelling as a pauper

around the continent.

It was Guatemala in particular, where a reformist government was unseated by a CIA-backed coup, that transformed him. Guevara described how he would bathe his weapon in blood "and, mad with fury... slit the throat of any enemy who falls into my hands." He talked about the duty of the "revolutionary doctor" to introduce "social medicine." And he discovered the writings of Mao Tse-tung, whom he found more relevant than the Soviet pantheon to Latin America.

It was with Guevara that the first contact occurred, informally, between the Soviet Union and the Cuban revolutionaries, in Mexico in 1955. It was Guevara, according to Anderson, who forged the missile deal with the Soviets in 1962. Meanwhile, it was also Guevara who organized the trials and executions of several hundred people accused of torture and murder under the corrupt, cruel regime of Cuba's ousted dictator, Fulgencio Batista. "Either you kill first, or else you get killed," said Guevara.

When the Soviet Union backed down over the missile



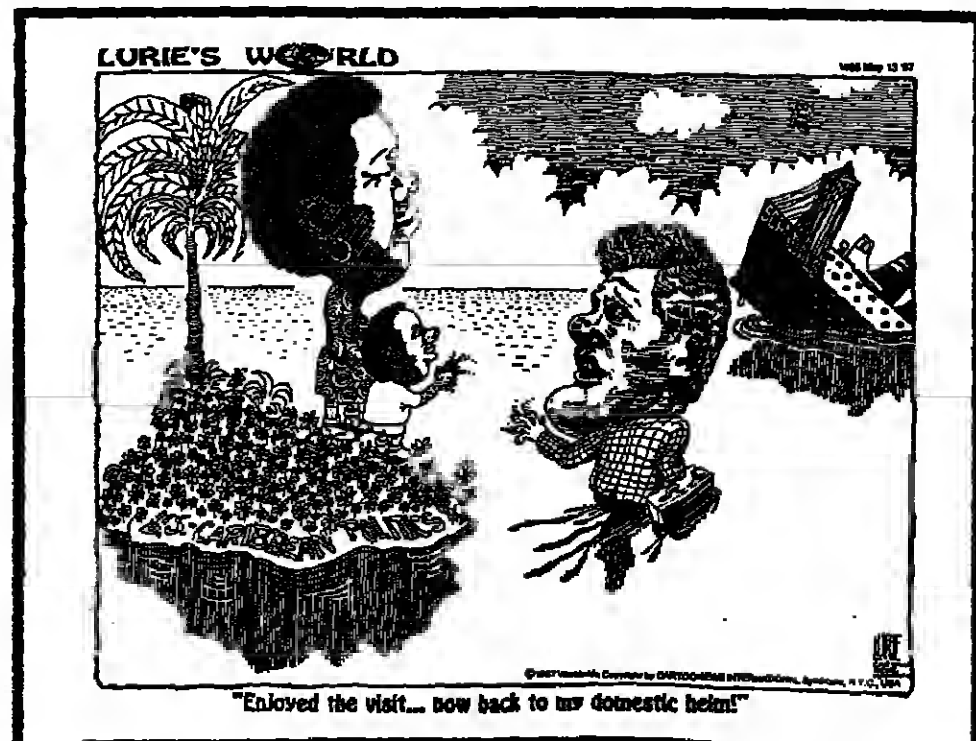
Guevara

crisis, Guevara claimed that if the missiles had been under Cuban control, they would have fired them.

While tracing Guevara's disastrous direct involvement in revolution with scant regard for local Soviet communist parties, Anderson details the ways in which the chronically asthmatic Guevara continued to abjure money and power for its own sake, shed all comforts, inspired tremendous discipline and loyalty, and sought obsessively to sink his individuality into rebel groups he believed would pave the way for global

Communism. For Lee Anderson, Guevara's dream was built on the premise that human beings could live for moral rather than material incentives. Yet the man whom Jean Paul Sartre praised as "not only an intellectual but also the most complete human being of our age" could only achieve this by distancing himself from individual reality. He treated death lightly. Hence, it came early, and made him immortal. ■

Financial Times Syndication



"Enjoyed the visit... now back to my domestic realm"

Middle East Beat

by Khairi Toubek

Mountains and friends

A WHILE ago, an influential writer wrote a book about the Kurdish people, titled *No Friends but the Mountains*. But as it turns out, the Kurds have more friends than the writer assumes.

However, the problem is that the Kurdish leadership seems to value its outside friends more than they do of one another. One does not want to talk about party politics, for in this case they are shaped by individuals rather than programs.

It is intentional to use the term "arming" when describing alliances and counter-alliances by Mr. Barzani. But it cannot be right to be amused, like most indifferent observers are when it comes to the tragedy of a people.

His political program is based on tribal loyalties, and his chief protagonist Mr. Talabani is in the same boat. Even the PKK and its assumed internationalism and defence of the wretched of the earth, would not hesitate to destroy lives and properties belonging to the supposed oppressed classes.

Nevertheless, they seem to be true to their internationalism when it comes to killing that does not recognize ethnic origin. The biggest losers are the Kurdish people, and the real winners are those who want to preserve their influence and power base in the most cynical exploitation of emotions and human suffering. All the financial resources spent on weaponry and killing, could have fed, taught, and housed thousands of poverty and disease stricken Kurdish children and adults. But alas, Kurdistan will remain the killing fields of our region.

Even by the standards of the Middle East, it is shocking when one observes how Barzani manages to muster support. A while ago, and overnight, he called upon the assistance of the Iraqi army to help him fight the forces of Mr. Talabani and managed to get this support. Of course, predictably, the world went up in arms and Iraq was threatened with immediate response unless it stopped interfering in Kurdish affairs. The episode passed unnoticed later on, and the fighting Kurdish factions came to an agreement, sponsored by Ankara.

What happened next, Mr. Barzani called on the support of the Turkish army to fight his battles against the PKK. Of course, Turkey was obliging, and went in with a force of over 50,000 troops to fight the PKK. The amazing issue is that, Mr. Barzani still treats the territories under his control, as private fiefdoms, and exclusive lands that know no sovereignty. Turkey was obliging because its troubles with the Kurdish communists are well known, but in all this the unity of its lands have become just a mere slogan, misused and abused in the international circles. It is a dangerous precedence for the international community to start playing around with mild and ineffectual condemnations when sovereign territories are invaded by the requests of one tribal leader or another.

Turkey's recent move in northern Iraq, has come at a time of national soul searching in the country between the sparring sessions with the military at one hand and the Refah government on the other. More interestingly, though one is not a subscriber to the conspiracy theories, it comes at a time when the joint manoeuvres between Turkey and Israel were postponed.

The press has written that such a postponement is due to the difference in outlook, between Mr. Erbakan and his Generals which may or may not be the case, but will this difference in outlook, influence the manner in which both, the Turkish government and military, view the borders of their neighbors. ■

● The grand old man of politics, Elias Freij quits public life after year of holding the fort. Mr Freij has been mayor of Bethlehem for the last 25 years. Since the establishment of the Palestine National Authority, Mr Freij became the Palestinian Minister of Tourism. At the ripe old age of 80, the mayor says that he wants to spend more time with his family. He has 20 grandchildren. Mr Freij says that he also wants to write his memoirs. A Greek Orthodox Christian, Mr Freij was elected mayor in 1972 and at times he came into conflict with the Palestine Liberation Organization for his controversial views of peace making.



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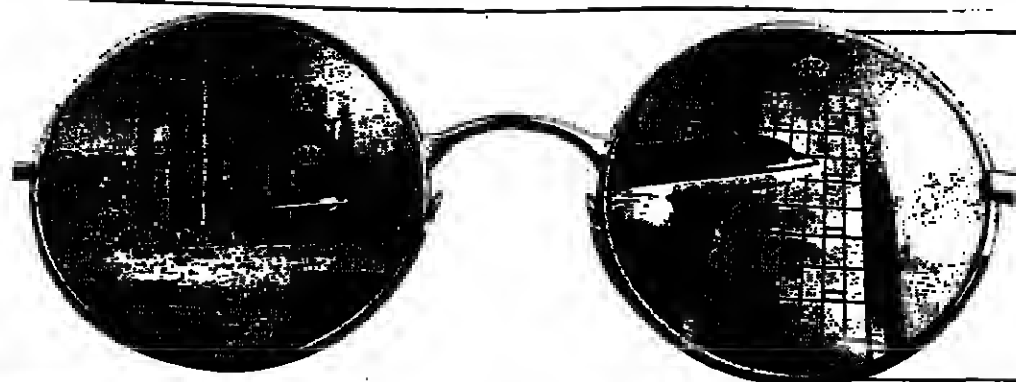
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ROYAL JORDANIAN
Reflecting the Change.

Business scene

Negotiations were going on since the last few weeks to conclude a merger between The Bank of Jordan and the Jordan-Kuwait Bank, but no agreement has been reached.

This is the second attempt to merge the two banks. The first was made three years ago, but the two sides failed to agree on the merger. The Jordan-Kuwait Bank intends to increase its capital to JD 20 million, either by capitalizing its reserves and earnings or through private subscription.

The third conference of the Arab Financial Markets in Lebanon starts Thursday 22 May. More than 300 Arab businessmen and bankers are taking part in the venue, in addition to foreign investors and investing funds. The conference agenda deals with economic reform programs, privatization in the Arab World, flows of foreign investments to the Arab markets, the investment climate in these countries, and the role of the private sector in financing and managing the infrastructure. From Jordan, the director of the Amman Financial Market, Mr. Wahib Al Shaer is expected to attend the conference in addition to the chairman of the board of the Arab Bank, Abdel Majid Shoman.

The Arab Islamic International Bank (AIIB) was established as a JD 40 million shareholding concern. The Arab Bank owns 97% of the AIIB's capital which is expected to run its banking and commercial services according to Islamic Sharia rules.

The Bank was registered in the Ministry of Trade and Industry. In addition to the Arab Bank, shareholders in the new Islamic Bank are Abdul Majid Shoman, and Khaled Shoman. Yesterday, Wednesday, 21 May all accounts in the Amman Investment Bank were closed to launch the transitional stage to convert the Bank's ownership to the Arab Bank.

Foreign Exchange

Tuesday, 21 May

	Buy JD	Sell JD
US \$	0.7080	0.7100
£	1.1510	1.1568
DM	0.4124	0.4145
SFr	0.4801	0.4825
FRF	0.1227	0.1233
YEN (100)	0.5624	0.5652
DEL	0.3667	0.3685
LYF (100)	0.0419	0.0421

Bank mergers would bring a more vibrant economy, official states

AMMAN (Star)—The banking sector to Jordan is on the verge of many and potentially exciting changes.

There are at present 21 commercial banks, including the Housing Bank, which is a housing-commercial bank. This is in addition to the Industrial Development Bank, the Cities and Villages Bank, the Cooperative Bank, and the Agricultural Credit Corp. The biggest bank is, by far, the Arab Bank, in terms of both equity and total assets.

The prevailing pattern of ownership is private, which is in line with the basic philosophy of the state towards economic activity. There is a noticeable concentration of ownership of most operating banks, while the banking sector is also characterized by both stability and conservatism, the President of the Arab Academy for Banking and Financial Studies (AABFS), Dr. Mustafa Hudeib told *The Star*.

All commercial banks succeeded in realizing the eight percent target ratio prescribed by the Basic Committee (BIS), while some banks overshot the ratio. This has been possible through both the issue of fresh share capital and higher profit retention Dr. Hudeib added.

Whether it is conservatism or the well-established, assidue, British banking tradition, the higher percentage of funds is still allocated to short-term lending: financial trade (both local and foreign), working capital, the construction industry, and services. Because of the very small size of the public sector and the accelerated pace of privatization, bank funds are basically employed in the private sector.

Although banks have devoted considerable efforts to the achievement of balanced geographical coverage of populated areas, branches remain concentrated in Amman and Irbid. The introduction of technology is modest because of limited resources. The same holds true for bank marketing.

The banking sector is operating under a highly deregulated environment, whereby monetary policy relies heavily on general controls rather than on selective controls. There is also a consistent coordination between monetary and fiscal policies, on the one hand, and economic policy on the other. It is noteworthy to say that Jordan has been implementing most of the recommendations of the IMF, and that it is structural adjustment and economic

reform programs are quite successful.

The banking system operates increasingly within a strategy, focused on globalization, and economic integration with other Arab countries.

The Amman Financial Market is one of the most effective among Arab emerging markets, playing a significant role in private capital formation and privatization. However, most financial instruments are still traditional and are in the form of ordinary shares. Both the banking system and the Financial Market have been instrumental in attracting Arab and foreign capital investment, the AABFS president pointed out.

Bank mergers have so far taken place in Jordan on a limited scale, and were concentrated naturally on the acquisition of small banks by larger banks, on the one hand, and weak banks by stronger banks.

Bank mergers in Jordan are designed mostly to achieve many advantages Dr. Hudeib pointed out. These include:

- More efficient operation, because of the economies of the mass-scale production of services, cost-saving, and better organization.

- Diversification of loans and investments, on both a sectoral and geographic basis.

- Increasing loan ceilings, which are usually based on equity, total assets or other variables.

- More balanced skill and cultural mix, because of the combination of more than one bank into one organization.

- More adequate bank equity and higher levels of solvency.

- Wider relationships with



Hudeib

correspondent banks abroad.

- Better coverage of geographic areas, because of wider branch networks.

- It is easier to achieve bank size through mergers, as compared with the establishment of new branches.

- Realizing the advantages of synergy.

- Widening the market for the shares of the merged banks.

- Expression of the bundle of services and products to satisfy changing customer needs.

- Application of advanced, or more sophisticated, technologies.

- Stronger ability to compete in the markets, vis-a-vis

other banks and financial institutions.

On the other hand, for bank mergers to realize these advantages, free and effective competition should be preserved for the benefit of the customer base. In other words, the decline in the number of banks should not adversely affect bank efficiency and customer services, nor should it lead to some degree of monopoly.

The Arab Academy for Banking and Financial Studies is a pan-Arab regional academy working under the umbrella of the Arab League, with two specific major functions—education in the field of banking and finance. And professional training for the banking and financial sector.

The AABFS covers 21 Arab countries and functions to bring Arab bankers together through training and educational programs.

Since it began, the Academy has graduated more than 1000 Arabs in banking. Over the last five years, the Academy has trained more than 11,000 bank employees through its professional training programs.

Dr. Hadeib continued to say that the Academy cooperates with local and international banking institutions and bodies like the American Bankers Association, Chartered Institute of Bankers and the International Securities Markets Association.

British Midland expands its route network from East Midlands Airport

BRITISH MIDLAND is to launch its first scheduled flights to Portugal from East Midlands Airport, further enhancing its position as The Airline for Europe.

With fares starting at £199, the weekly flights to Faro will operate each Thursday from 26 June to 30 October—the peak holiday season, for the convenience of local passengers.

Austin Reid, managing director, said: "The introduction of this route helps to meet the needs of local travelers by offering them another popular holiday destination from the conveniently situated East Midlands Airport. It complements our existing summer services to Malaga, Palma and Nice and highlights our commitment to expanding our regional network."

Prince Al Waleed becomes shareholder of Magnesia Company

IN CONJUNCTION with his continued contribution to distinguished projects in Arab countries, Prince Al Waleed Bin Talal Bin Abdel Azziz, and chairman of the Saudi Arabia Holding Company signed a new agreement making him a founder shareholder of the \$43 million Jordan Magnesia Co.

Chairman of the Founders Committee, Mr. Talal Arefat, announced that the prince is the only Arab shareholder. The rest of the shares are held by major Jordanian companies and institutions such as the Dead Sea Industries Co., Arab Potash Co., Social Security Fund, Jordan Investment Corp., Industrial Development Bank, Jordan Investment and Finance Bank and the Arab Bank.

Mr. Arefat added that the Company was established on May 15 and elected its first Board of Directors.

Magnesia, which relies on minerals extracted from Dead Sea brine, is expected to start production at the end of 1999. The project's capacity will



Prince Al Waleed

cover seven percent of the world market for Magnesia Oxide.

This investment is the third in less than six months since the prince's last visit to Jordan. His investments in Jordan, in addition to the Jordan Magnesia Co., include a majority shareholding in the Mediterranean Tourism Co., (Amman Four Seasons) and the Philadelphia Investment Bank.

Prince Al Waleed is a private

entrepreneur and an international investor who holds substantial interests in Saudi Arabia that includes the United Saudi Commercial Bank, Saudi Cairo Bank, Aziz-Panda United Corp., Herfy Fats Food Co., Deemah United Food Industries Corp., Azizia Commercial Investment Co., Al Mawashi Al Mukarash United Livestock Co., National Industrialization Co., Silk La Silk Telecomunication Co., Arab Radio and Television and Rotana Audio-Visual Production Co.

He has substantial international holdings in Citicorp, the global bank holding company, the Four Seasons Regent International, a luxury hotel chain, the Fairmont Hotel chain, Saks Fifth Avenue—the US fashion retailer, the Plaza Hotel in New York, the George V Hotel in Paris, the Copley Plaza Hotel in Boston, the Four Seasons Hotel in London, the Disneyland theme park in Paris, the Canary Wharf.

Bahraini expo seeks to establish strong ties with Jordan

MORE THAN fifty Bahraini companies are taking part in the first Bahraini exhibition in Jordan to be held from 2-6 June at Philadelphia Hotel.

"Made in Bahrain" is organized by the Bahraini Trade Ministry and the Bahrain International Show and the Jordanian "Al Madina Information."

Industrial products on display include oil industry equipment, aluminum products, petrochemicals, textiles, garments, mechanical instruments, foodstuffs, furniture, electrical products, plastics, rubbers, Bahraini tobacco, mineral water, medical equipment, hotel and hospital accessories, paper made products, paintings, sport shoes, Bahraini jewelry and some Bahraini handicrafts.

Participating institutions include the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, ministries of Cabinet Affairs and Information, oil and industry, Bahrain

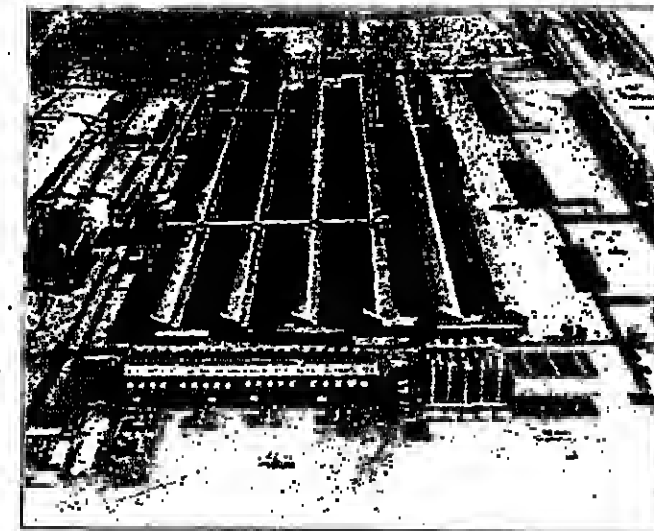
Chamber of Trade and Industry and the Bahrain Council for Promotion and Marketing.

A high level Bahraini business delegation will be headed by the Bahraini Minister of Trade, Ali Saleh Al Saleh.

More than 35 Bahraini businessmen will visit Jordan during the expo. They are seeking to establish business ties with their counterparts in the Amman Chamber of Industry and make links with importers and producers from the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Syria.

The Amman Chamber of Industry will hold a seminar to discuss future economic relations between the two countries and ways of enhancing investment opportunities and carry out joint ventures between.

Other working papers are dealing with the potential of commercial and industrial en-



An aerial view of Bahrain's national industries

vironment to Bahrain and the incentives this country provides for investors.

Foreign investors are now

allowed to completely own a project in Bahrain without the need to have a Bahraini partner.

UN books promote 'good governance' for sustainable development

TWO NEW United Nations Development Program Publications, *Governance for Sustainable Human Development* and *Reconceptualizing Governance*, examine the crucial role of good governance in promoting economic development and enlarging the choices of all people in society to better their living conditions.

Good governance is first and foremost participatory, transparent, accountable and equitable. It promotes the rule of law—not the rule of men—and equal justice under the law. Good governance ensures that political, social and economic priorities are based on broad consensus in society and that the voices of the poorest and most vulnerable are heard in the decision-making process. Sustainable human development will not be possible without strong, effective and capable governance, says James Gustave Speth, UNDP Administrator.

More than a third of UNDP programme expenditures are currently allocated to governance projects in developing and transition countries. The policy papers identify five priority areas for governance programming that UNDP believes will best achieve the overall goals of poverty eradication and sustainable human development.

These include support to:

- Governing institutions: legislatures, judiciaries, and electoral bodies

- Public and private sector management

- Decentralization and support to local governance

- Civil society organizations

- Governance in special circumstances, such as post-crisis situations

UNDP is the United Nations largest provider of grant funding for development. Its support to strengthening governance practices and institutions aims to foster long-term economic growth, social cohesion and political stability in developing and transition countries.

Governance for Sustainable Human Development provides a framework for future assistance in support of good governance projects in developing and transition countries. Governance is defined as the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels. It comprises the processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences.

This broad concept of governance includes not only the

state, but also the private sector and civil society. All three are critical to progress and UNDP is now expanding its support to civil society organizations and the private sector in an effort to promote development at every level of society. Above all, UNDP aims to promote constructive interaction among all three sectors to address problems and take advantage of development opportunities at local, regional and national levels.

Governance is no longer a system in national isolation, the policy paper observes. Rather, governance institutions must today interact globally, gain inspiration from international trends and provide a national environment that is conducive to overall development. The paper addresses this new situation and outlines UNDP's role in helping countries strengthen their governance institutions to better meet the political and economic challenges posed by the forces of globalization.

Reconceptualizing Governance provides an in-depth discussion on the role of governance in development. It examines the specific impact of the three domains of governance—the state, the private sector, and civil society—on poverty eradication policies,

promotion of economic growth, protection of the environment, enhancement of central and local government performance, and promotion of gender equality and social cohesion.

The publication also explores the dramatic changes in economic, political and social systems since the early 1980s and the impact these changes have had on national governance institutions and sustainable human development. It examines the challenges posed by environmental degradation, economic globalization, religious and ethnic tensions, the collapse of communism and the emergence of regional alliances. It concludes with a discussion on the need for building governance capacity to effectively promote poverty alleviation, job growth, protection of the environment and gender equality.

The final chapter issues a call for international aid organizations to find ways to incorporate concepts of good governance into the design and implementation of all their development activities. Good governance practices and institutions must be enhanced, it argues, to enable countries to effectively implement policies to achieve sustainable human development.

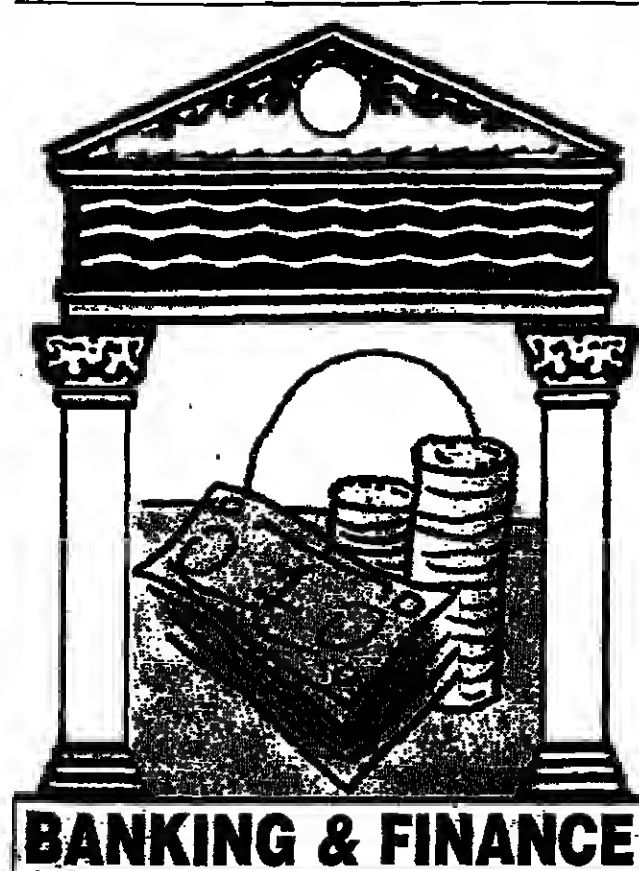
MARKET WATCH

Highest and lowest performing stocks in the Amman Financial Market

SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Middle East Complex ■ Intel Electricity ■ Arab International House 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Cairo Bank ■ Middle East Complex ■ Arab Financial Investment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Middle East Bank ■ National Portfolio Securities ■ Sharp Investment Projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ National Portfolio Securities ■ Arab Center For Pharm. Industry ■ National Aluminum Industry
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ National Salary House ■ Chemical Industry Union ■ Arab Electric Industry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Woven Industry ■ Al-Taqat Industry ■ National Cables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Nayash Dies & Moulds ■ Arab Insurance ■ National Engineering Industry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Woven Industry ■ National Industry ■ Unwoven Industry
General Price Index: 156,640	155,928	151,840	156,130
Trade Volume: 1332912	623376	645770	1313594
Stock Volume: 717456	455258	533411	594005

Highest Traded Stocks: Cement Factory, 326086; Cairo Bank, 18284; Arab Potash, 159224; Cement Factory, 36732

All data provided by ACCESS Tel: 646868 Fax: 646949



BritishBank stresses quality of services for its clients

EDITOR'S NOTE: Mr John P. Pascoe is the chief executive officer of the BritishBank in Jordan. He recently talked to *The Star* about the bank's role and the facilities it offers. Mr Pascoe is responsible for directing the BritishBank policy and provides local support to HSBC Group entities interested in establishing business links in this country. Excerpts follow:

How do you see the role of the BritishBank in the Jordanian economy?

Our relationship with the area dates back more than 100 years and we were the pioneer of modern banking in the region. As a member of the HSBC

Group, BritishBank provides a link into its worldwide branch network, offering advantages in trade finance dealings. It also provides access to Group sister companies specializing in providing a range of financial services including project finance, investment products and offshore banking.

The Middle East Economic Digest (MEED) estimates that the region will need to spend in excess of \$200 billion in the next decade on infrastructure projects ranging from telecommunications to power generation and distribution, water processing and seaport development.

Within this, Jordan has its own ambitious plans. The capacity and capability of local banks is ultimately going to be a key issue for financing many of these projects.

There will be the question of capacity of these banks to meet these requirements and the shortfall will almost certainly have to be met by international financial institutions. The HSBC Group with total capital in 1996 of over £22 billion has significant ability to not only assist but provide the necessary expertise to access the world's capital markets.

We are also the leading provider of securities and sub-custodial services to facilitate inward investment to the Amman Financial Market. We provide full post-trade services

including corporate actions reporting and processing, settling of trade at the AFM, proxy voting and portfolio reporting to more than 15 global custodians, fund managers and international brokers.

BritishBank is the leading local sub-custodian in Jordan.

The BritishBank also provide Personal Assistance Loans (PAL). This is a packaged loan for up to JD 10,000. No guarantor is required as long as the applicants salary is paid to us by an employer known to the Bank.

BritishBank offers the only credit card available in Jordan. Interest free credit is offered for up to 45 days and only 10 percent of outstanding need be paid back each month. The card is international and JD denominated and offers ATM functions if required.

Our ATM card gives access to over 35,000 ATMs worldwide giving access to your JOD account in Jordan from most countries in the world.

What special services do you offer the local customer in Jordan?

The BritishBank, which has operated in Jordan since 1949, has become increasingly active in pioneering a range of personal banking products and services previously unavailable in Jordan. The emphasis is now on a proactive approach to personal customers to ensure that they are aware of the range of custom designed personal loans, credit cards and premium banking services available. Direct mail, visit programs and advertising are ensuring that the Bank's customers are aware, not only of the Bank's international standards, but also of its desire to offer its customers a high quality of service.

BritishBank offers one of the most accessible personal banking packages to employees of leading firms in Jordan together with the only credit card currently on offering in the market.

The message, that BritishBank is here for the private individual as well as the corporate customer has been welcomed in the market place. With the accent on well-trained, approachable staff, British Bank is demonstrating its commitment to pro-

viding service quality unparalleled in Jordan.

We believe that our customers should have access to the full range of international personal banking products and services available anywhere in the world which are permitted by local regulations. The special services that BritishBank provide include:

One-stop banking through trained Customer Representatives. Our customer Service Representatives are specifically trained to meet our customers enquiries and banking needs. All transactions except the traditional cash transactions can be handled at one desk with one person meaning that the customer gets fast accurate service every visit.

All of our larger account relationships are managed by an account relationship officer. The senior officer will be familiar with the company, institution or individuals needs and therefore ready to tailor services to the specific customer. The account holders do not need to be borrowers from us to warrant this service.

The other final product we offer is the Hexagon, which is our electronic banking system which you can link up to your own computer, and can operate your account from your desktop 24 hours a day.

How would you evaluate the performance of the banking sector in Jordan?

The financial highlights of the banking sector is consolidated and shows the following:

The growth in total assets was 5.1% in '96 compared to 12.1% in '95. Deposit growth in '96 was 3.9% compared with 7.8% in '95.

Also the increase in interest rates in '96 contributed to the growth in TMDs in 1996 as a percentage of total deposits.

In '95 TMDs were 68.5% of



Pascoe

total deposits, in '96 TMDs were 71.5% of total deposits. Growth in advances was 6.2% in '96 compared with 14.7% in 1995.

These figures indicate a leveling off in growth during 1996 which reflects our own impression of performance.

Does the much talked about merger into larger institutions help to create a more stable banking sector and help to create a more stable banking sector and therefore a more stable economy?

The growth of the banking sector for the last 10 years has been enormous. Total assets of banks since 1989 has grown from \$2.5 billion to current assets of \$8.7 billion. This is a significant growth and during this period the financial sector has been subject to significant reform designed to strengthen the system in general.

On top of that, whilst there has been a number of specialized institutions which have been formed to provide specialized services, the banking sector as such dominates a small number of local banks. So the banking sector in general could benefit positively, and some of the smaller banks could themselves benefit positively by merging and spreading their

Housing Bank's strategy enhances its role in building sound national economy

AMMAN (Star)—A new strategy for the Housing Bank has taken the banking sector by storm. Its decision taken on 2 May to start operating as an international commercial bank is likely to bring stiff competition. Its traditional services of offering housing loans for clients will of course, continue.

The next stage of the Bank's mission is seen as part and parcel of the course it took over the last 24 years since its establishment in 1973.

In the light of the increase in its activities, resources and deposits, and the intense competition in the banking sector, the Housing Bank gradually directed its operations to providing a commercial service. The Bank's previous role to extend housing loans moved simultaneously over the few years with its commercial task.

The Bank provided JD 1100 million housing loans in 1996.

In the last meeting of the Bank's general assembly, Mr Zuhair Khouri was re-elected as chairman and chief executive officer of the Bank and Abdullah Al Obied of the Kuwaiti Real Estate and Investment Group became vice chairman. Mr Abdul Qader Al Duweik now takes over as the Bank's general director.

Al Duweik was deputy general director over many years and joined the Bank since its establishment.

Accompanying these developments was the increase of the Housing Bank's

paid up capital in JD 50 million through private subscription.

Mr Al Duweik said that the Bank began its operations on a solid foundation, with a Jordanian-Arab capital contribution which was just JD 25 million.

Speaking on the Bank's new strategy, that of providing a comprehensive commercial banking service, Al Duweik said the "the coming stage brings great challenges and thus, we have to pass them successfully."

But Duweik said he is confident that the Housing Bank can meet up to the challenge. "Our cadres are fully qualified in the commercial banking world and the Bank is functioning according to an advanced banking technological base."

Al Duweik added that the Bank has introduced a new auto-service that meets the needs of everybody. Also, the 121 branches of the Housing Bank are linked together and this guarantees a top service for clients all over the Kingdom.

The comprehensive strategy of the Bank depends on regional and worldwide developments in the banking sector. However, the strategy is targeted at increasing the volume of assets and to activate banking activities in the light of the expected economic and investment climate in various sectors of the national economy.

"Certainly, this will be associated with a growth in the Arab and foreign investments that is encouraged by an



Khouri



Duweik

attractive investment environment," Al Duweik maintained.

Moreover, the Housing Bank focus is on boosting its contribution to cover finance and credit instruments. It will also embark on a balanced policy to extend loans and facilities to help maintain good liquidity levels.

The Bank's strategy includes intensive efforts to improve and develop its services by offering more modern banking services. In addition, it has plans to

co-operate with international institutions to issue investment funds—the "Jordan Investment Fund" for instance is expected to be formed in the near future.

The Housing Bank managed to maintain a high growth ratio in its all activities in 1996.

According to its annual report, the Pre-tax-profit amounted to JD 10.4 million by the end of last year compared

Continued on page 7

Continued on page 7

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BritishBank

The British Bank of the Middle East

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ALWAYS A NEW STEP FORWARD

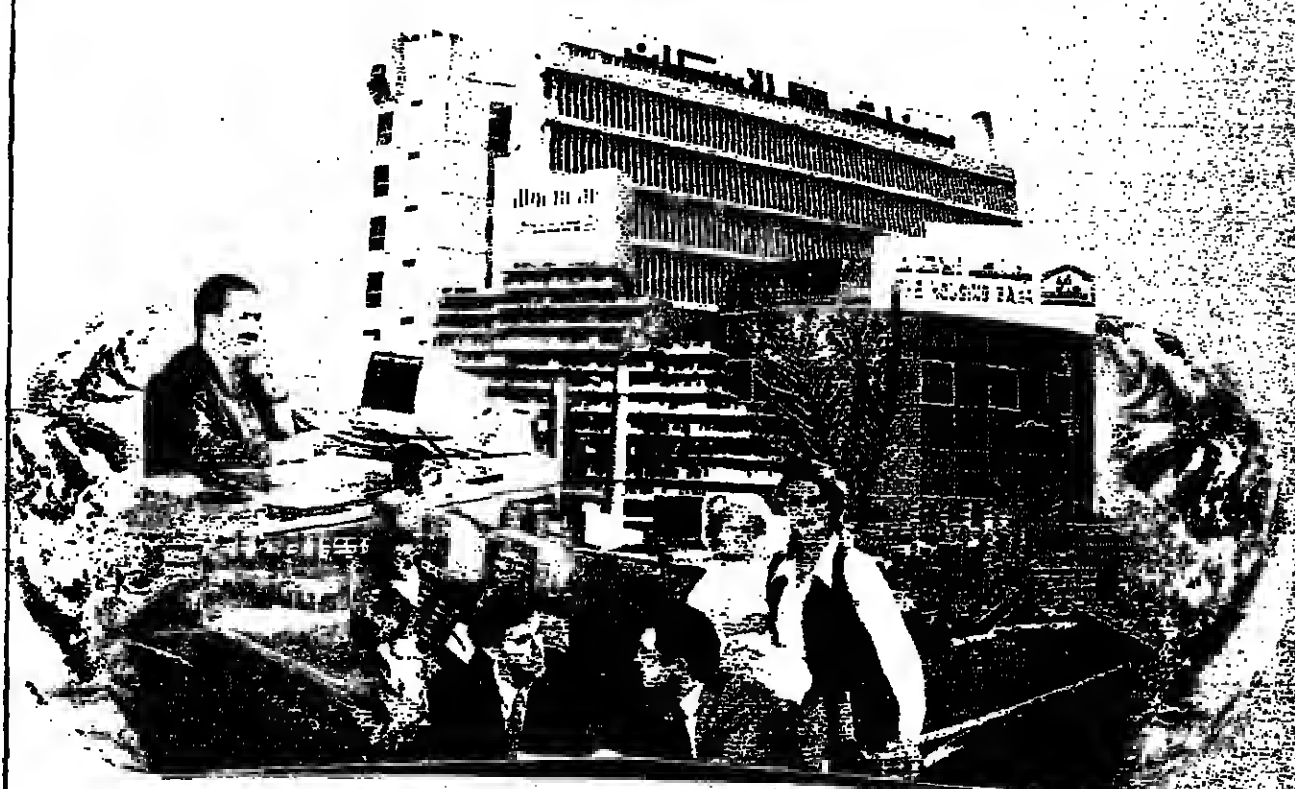
THE HOUSING BANK

AN INTERNATIONAL COMMERCIAL BANK

The Housing Bank would like to inform the public of its relaunching as a full fledged commercial bank as of May 97 extending all commercial banking services as the rest of local, Arab and international banks.

Whatever your banking needs are, the Housing Bank has the ability and the experience to accommodate them, whether private or commercial banking.

Our commitment to serve customers will enable us to introduce new and advanced commercial banking services in Jordan and around the world.



بنك الاسكان
THE HOUSING BANK
AN INTERNATIONAL COMMERCIAL BANK
بنك تجاري دولي

CITIZEN INQUIRY TELEPHONE AT THE HOUSING BANK IS (659) 101

By Lynne Duke

KASHASH, Governor of the Jordanian National Bank, said that the country's economy is showing signs of recovery after a period of stagnation. He noted that the government's budget for 1997 is balanced, which is a positive sign for the economy. He also mentioned that the country's foreign reserves are at a comfortable level, and that the government is committed to maintaining a stable and sound financial system.

The expansion of capital markets is a key priority for the government, and the National Bank is working closely with the Ministry of Finance to develop a regulatory framework for the new market. This will help to attract foreign investment and promote economic growth.

At the same time, the government is focused on improving the efficiency of public services and reducing the budget deficit. These efforts are essential for creating a more stable and attractive environment for investors and businesses.

But the most significant challenge facing the country is the need to diversify its economy away from its heavy reliance on oil and tourism. The government is implementing various programs to support the private sector and encourage innovation and entrepreneurship.

For now, the outlook is cautiously optimistic. With the right policies and continued support from the international community, Jordan has the potential to achieve sustainable economic growth and development.

An officer in Mobutu's Ministry.

Monday.

What

By Scott Peterson

KABUL, Afghanistan—The Taliban regime has announced that it will allow foreign aid workers to return to the country. This decision is seen as a positive step towards normalizing relations with the international community. However, the Taliban's motives remain unclear, and there are concerns about the safety of aid workers in the region.

For many, the Taliban's offer is a welcome sign of progress. It suggests that the regime is willing to engage with the world and address the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. But others are skeptical, arguing that the Taliban's actions are purely tactical and aimed at gaining international support.

Now, the world is watching to see if the Taliban's promises are backed up by concrete actions. The international community must remain vigilant and ensure that any aid workers who return to Afghanistan are protected and their work is monitored.

But for the people of Afghanistan, the most important question is whether this move will lead to a more stable and peaceful future. Only time will tell.

Increased Iraqi oil exports have reached crisis point. The situation in the Gulf remains tense, and the international community is closely monitoring developments. Any further escalation of hostilities could have serious global consequences.

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With new name, former Zaire begins process of rebuilding nation

By Lynne Duke

KINSHASA, Congo—The rebel movement that toppled Mobutu Sese Seko and seized control of this country last Monday took its first tentative steps toward fixing the ruined economy and civic life of this vast capital city.

At the same time, members of the business elite that benefited from Mobutu's autocratic rule sought assurances about their standing with the new government.

The explosion of euphoria that has gripped Kinshasa since the rebels entered on last Saturday continued Monday as civil servants returned to their jobs and merchants returned to their market stalls.

But new tensions could be felt in some quarters because of spi-

raling prices, food and gasoline shortages and the general economic anarchy brought on by Kinshasa's fall.

And with officials of Laurent Kabila's Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire spreading their military apparatus throughout the city, the hunt was under way for suspected enemies.

Two days after a sweep into the city that left 222 of its 5 million people dead, alliance officials set up headquarters at the posh InterContinental Hotel. The corridors were filled all day with the anxious din of hundreds of business, political and civic leaders, all awaiting clues on how the alliance will govern.

Jose Endondo Bononge, chairman of the National Chamber of Commerce, said business

leaders are eager to participate in alliance plans. "We are here to make this country work," he said.

Now that their military victory is sealed after a seven-month drive across Africa's third-largest nation, the alliance's first political signals came in the form of a town hall-style meeting with business leaders. The alliance's planning minister, Babi Mbayi, sought their comments and questions on several issues, such as currency fluctuation and the flow of goods around the country.

Regarding business leaders who founished under—and because of—Mobutu's corrupt and venal government, Mbayi offered assurances to the crowd of about 500.

"We are a government that forgives," he said. "We will not

waste our time hunting people or settling scores."

That reassuring and participatory style of leadership seemed to contradict, however, the alliance's declaration that Kinshasa, especially the poor, will need to undergo ideological reeducation.

The alliance has employed the technique in many cities seized during its military campaign, making indoctrination classes a prerequisite for those seeking jobs within the alliance. Also to be instituted here are citizen "cells" at the neighborhood level to maintain order.

Repeating what alliance officials have said for months, Deogratias Bugera, an alliance spokesman, said Monday that political reeducation in the post-Mobutu era will be a first step to holding elections. Alliance officials say Zairians are beset by a "spirit of submission and servility" dating from the days of colonialism and exploited further by Mobutu's three decades of callous rule. Bugera said in the alliance's first news conference here.

Kabila, who remained in the southern city of Lubumbashi on Monday, has announced an interim national government, and he has pledged to establish a constituent assembly in 60 days.

Although Kabila, who has proclaimed himself president, has assured foreign nations that elections ultimately will be held, his officials have set no date. Opinion polling—an inexact science here—suggests that Kabila would not win the presidency. Many people see him as a valiant liberator but say they hope to finally have a choice for president—something Mobutu never allowed.

Kabila's alliance has renamed Zaire the Democratic Republic of Congo. State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said in Washington that the United

States will refer to the country by its new name—actually the name it adopted at independence in 1960, only to have Mobutu change it in 1971.

"Zaire went away on Friday afternoon," Burns said, pegging the change to the point at which Mobutu fled Kinshasa. "That country has vanished."

The name change is sure to create confusion, and perhaps diplomatic friction, with Congo's neighbor, the Republic of Congo.

But alliance officials have many more immediate and pressing problems to contend with, all of which converge on Kinshasa. The commercial infrastructure has been so pillaged and neglected by Mobutu and his ruling circle that banks are only marginal economic players; most commerce is conducted in the informal sector or black market. Roads are so rutted that cars can be swallowed by gaping potholes. Electricity does not operate in many neighborhoods. Effective health care is virtually nonexistent, while malaria and other diseases run rampant.

On the political front, Kinshasa was bed in political knots for seven years as Mobutu's supporters and their parliamentary opponents wrangled over democratic reforms but never actually produced them.

Kabila's movement has sent mixed messages to opposition figures who demand a role in the new government.

With the arrival of Kabila's forces, many of whom are ethnic Tutsis from eastern Zaire or Rwanda, yet another volatile element has entered the mix. Thirteen patients were removed from a Kinshasa hospital today by rebel soldiers, who beat them and took them to a rebel camp, a health official said. Reportedly among them were several men suspected of being Rwandan Hutus who fought against the

rebels on the side of Mobutu's army.

Over the weekend, several soldiers in Mobutu's armed forces were killed by angry mobs, but most soldiers' deaths appear to have occurred at the hands of rebels in a series of relatively minor battles in Kinshasa with the few holdouts of Mobutu's forces. At least one soldier was summarily executed by alliance troops.

The total death toll for the weekend takeover stood at 222

Monday, the International Committee of the Red Cross said.

The occupation of the city sent scores of high-level military and political figures who were close to Mobutu across the Congo River in boats to Brazzaville, capital of the Republic of Congo.

Among them was one of Mobutu's sons, Capt. Mobutu Kongo of the military's Special Presidential Division, who is nicknamed "Saddam Hussein" and is reviled by many. Kabila's

forces have accused him of killing Mobutu Sese Seko's last defense minister and army chief of staff, Gen. Mabele Licko Bakungu, who had warned the elder Mobutu that Kinshasa could not be defended from the onslaught. The general was assassinated while trying to persuade the loyal presidential division to lay down its arms. ■

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

Mobutu seeks place of refuge after retreat from Kinshasa

By William Drozdiak

RABAT, Morocco—So where is he? The plush Hotel Amphitrite, a few miles down the Atlantic coast from this capital, has been sequestered for his convenience and surrounded by gendarmes. But there have been no sightings of the man in the leopard-skin hat.

Since he pulled out of Kinshasa last week to his northern refuge of Gbadolite, Mobutu Sese Seko's humiliating retreat from power has started to assume the inglorious wanderings of a modern Flying Dutchman.

He was reported to have flown into this North African monarchy Sunday, but officials close to King Hassan II insisted Monday that he never arrived. Palace sources say that even if Mobutu does avail himself of Moroccan hospitality, he would be granted only temporary refuge.

Another possible destination is Liechtenstein, but the tiny tax haven in the Alps has made it abundantly clear that Mobutu would not be welcome. France reportedly is Mobutu's personal preference, but his presence there before national elections are held this month could be a severe embarrassment for President Jacques Chirac and his political allies.

Once hailed as a friend of the West and an African bulwark in the geopolitical struggle against communism, Mobutu is discovering that the outside world can be a harsh and unwelcoming place for a disgraced dictator.

News services reported last Monday that Mobutu's first stop after he fled his stronghold in what was then still called Zaire on Saturday night was the West African country of Togo. He was said to be resting there and commiserating about his bleak prospects with his host, Gnassingbe Eyadema, whose reputation for plundering his nation's resources approaches that of his notorious guest.

Representatives of Congo's new leader, Laurent Kabila, have declared that any country offering shelter to Mobutu would be committing "an unfriendly act." They said they will press for his early extradition so he can stand trial—possibly before an international tribunal—for the abuses he is accused of perpetrating during nearly 32 years in power.

French officials say those threats will not influence any decision about granting

Mobutu permission to stay in their country. He has traveled regularly in the past to France, where he owns a villa worth more than \$5 million near Nice. He has expressed a desire to settle there to continue treatment for his prostate cancer in nearby Monaco, according to Western diplomats here.

A French Foreign Ministry spokesman said the government has not broached the issue because it has not received a formal request from Mobutu. "We do not know his intentions yet," he said.

Nonetheless, French commentators have stressed that Chirac and his governing allies are worried that allowing Mobutu into the country would magnify opposition charges that the ruling center-right alliance committed serious blunders that have undermined France's stature in Africa.

Until France's election campaign is over and Chirac decides it is politically safe to let Mobutu into the country, Western diplomats and Moroccan officials say it would be plausible on several counts for King Hassan to offer temporary refuge in the fallen dictator.

Like the Shah of Iran, who traveled to Morocco on his first voyage into exile, Mobutu is afflicted with a life-threatening disease.

"Hassan has a special bond with powerful rulers who suffer a bad twist of fate. He also wants to stand by those who support Morocco's sovereignty claims in southern Sahara, and



Mobutu

Mobutu was a strong ally on that issue," a senior Western diplomat said.

In the 1970s, King Hassan dispatched some of Morocco's crack troops to help Mobutu's army put down a secessionist movement in Zaire's copper-rich Shaba province. But two months ago, when Mobutu stopped here in plead for new military assistance to resist Kabila's advances, the king refused.

Even more than bailing out Mobutu, Hassan would relish the opportunity to provide a big favor to his close friend, Chirac. The Moroccan king was dismayed by the deterioration in relations with France under Chirac's Socialist predecessor, Francois Mitterrand.

Among his many foreign properties, Mobutu owns an ornate palace in the southern Moroccan oasis of Marrakech.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

The hungry Iraqis

What's behind the blame game

By Scott Peterson

KARBALA, Iraq—In 1985, long before the 1991 Gulf War, it was a spectacle that drew doctors from across Iraq: "There was one case of malnutrition," recalls Abdul Kareem Salal, a doctor at the children's hospital in Karbala, "and it was like a disaster. Nobody had ever seen it before."

But for Iraqis today—nearly seven years after president Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait and the United Nations imposed sanctions—those days are over.

For many like Dr. Salal, the increased Iraqi suffering has reached crisis point.

"Now you walk into any hospital, and there are a dozen people in each room who are malnourished," he says.

Few doubt that the lack of food in Iraq is exacting a growing toll. But few agree on the real reasons that several thousand children die each month.

Bombarded by the anti-West rhetoric, most Iraqis blame the UN sanctions, which the US as chief proponent—wants in place until Iraq's capacity to invade its oil-exporting neighbors is eliminated.

But among UN and Western relief officials and diplomats, sanctions are only part of the problem.

They point to Iraq's refusal to take advantage of humanitarian exemptions and to its massive military spending in the 1980's, which wrecked the economy even before the Gulf war.

They also note its cynical manipulation of the "sanctions card" that appears to have rein-

forced Saddam's rule.

US officials insist that sanctions target Iraq's leadership and aren't meant as a collective punishment for the war.

But images of emaciated children, juxtaposed against a steady supply of pricey new cars on the streets of Baghdad for the ruling elite, are steadily undermining support for the embargo.

"It's clear the government is not weakened at all," says a Western relief official. "They use sanctions to strengthen their grip. It raises a lot of questions: are these sanctions effective?"

In the children's hospital at Karbala, the impact is obvious—at time seven resembling cases of famine in Africa, one two-year-old boy, Amjit, is barely 12 pounds.

"We have many, many like this," says Salal.

Accurate figures are difficult to come by, but a 1995 UNICEF report noted that 28 percent of the children under five years old were underdeveloped. Across Iraq, more than half the hospitalized children are malnourished.

"So what if the monthly death toll is 4,500 (the Iraqi figure for child deaths) or if it is 4,299—it is all semantics," says Philippe Heppner, the Belgian head of the UN children's fund in Iraq. "What is important is that there is a serious problem for children today, and it's deteriorating fast."

For a country that boasted an oil-driven per capita income of more than \$8,000 in 1979, the fall has been hard. Income has dropped to less than \$500 a year, and 15 percent of the

population of 22 million is now at risk of malnutrition.

The UN considers the situation throughout Iraq to be "disastrous," with the "majority" of the civilian population believed to be living below the poverty line. But it says sanctions aren't only to blame.

Iraq's ability to maintain a high standard of living began to slip well before the Gulf war.

The long Iran-Iraq war of the 1980's hurt Iraq's oil production, saddled it with tens of billions in debt, and soaked up well over half the national budget.

Though Iraq's annual foreign exchange earnings grew 50-fold from 1970 to 1980, to \$26 billion, it was squandered on a war that Iraq initiated.

UN Security Council resolutions since 1990 have all carried humanitarian-aid and food exemptions. And for years Iraq rejected an oil-for-food deal—closely supervised by the UN—that allows the sale of \$2 billion of Iraqi oil every six months to buy food and medicine and pay war reparations. Sanctions are to be lifted when the UN certifies that all of Iraq's extensive missile and weapons of mass destruction programs—nuclear, chemical, and biological—are eliminated. Due to Iraqi obfuscation, UN



officials say, that day will not come soon.

Iraqi officials, however, they accuse the US of trying to maintain its dominance in the region by permanently disabling Iraq's military and technological prowess.

"America and the UN know (all weapons of mass destruction) have been destroyed by

their hands, but they use it as an excuse to keep sanctions to hurt the Iraqi people," claims Minister of Trade Mahdi Mohamed Saleh. "They've killed 1 million people. That is the crime. It is bigger than Hiroshima and Nagasaki."

Christian Science Monitor

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BritishBank stresses quality of services for its clients

Continued from page 6

own risk, but the increase in size gives them a better opportunity to compete with the larger local banks.

As an international banking group, how does the BritishBank view the regional economic situation?

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Our own forecasts anticipate a period of consolidation for the economy during 1997 but picking up again in 1998. ■

HousingBank's strategy enhances its role in building sound national economy

Continued from page 6

with JD10.2 million in 1995. Its assets rose by JD 33 million compared with 1995 to reach JD 1.136 billion.

Its reserve balance rose to hit JD 56.3 million, more than double its paid up capital. Shareholders rights went up to JD 81.3 million. This puts the Housing Bank in second rank among Jordanian banks.

The growth rate in deposits at the Housing Bank exceeded the total deposits of the whole of the banking sector in the country. The Banks client's deposits stood at 5.5%, while those of the banking sector as a whole were 3.5%.

Total housing loans offered by the Housing Bank in 1996 was JD 225 million.

Since its foundation the Bank has extended housing loans worth JD 2266 million.

The Housing Bank has two branches in Palestine, one in Gaza and the other in Nablus; it also plans to open a third branch in that city sometime this year. ■

Back to Vietnam and its poignant memories

By Sandy Gall

THE BOY turned out to be 10. Small, slight as most Vietnamese are, nice-looking and exceptionally well-mannered. He proffered the usual collection of postcards, and unusually a couple of books as well. "The Quiet American," he said in his well-modulated English. "Let me see," I said, surprised, taking the slim, green, plastic-covered volume from his little pile. At first I could not believe the whole of Graham Greene's masterpiece could be contained in that almost wafer-thin format. But it was, all 288 pages of it, although some were fainter than others: a pirate photocopy of the latest Penguin edition.

"A dollar," I said, I had already discovered in the 24 hours I had been back in Saigon, or Ho Chi Minh City, to give it its official name, that everything costs \$1.

"Two dollars," the boy said, politely but firmly.

We were standing outside the Continental, where Greene always stayed and where Fowler met Pyle, the quiet American, for the first time. They met of course on the terrace, where everyone used to gather for a drink in the evening: prostitutes, pimps, politicians, journalists, French colonists, American contractors, Vietnamese agents and little girls selling necklaces of sweet-smelling jasmine.

The terrace, alas, is no more, pulled down in 1975 by the communist authorities who presumably thought it was too conducive to free speech, and thus subversive.

"Go on," said Sally, "don't be mean. Give him \$2." I gave in, just in case the great man's ghost was watching. His last sale of the day completed, the little boy walked demurely away across the square.

It was about 10 in the evening, and we had just spent a

pleasant hour in the garden of the Continental, set in an inner courtyard which looked largely unchanged, with the old garden furniture, and the old drinks list. Manhattan, Tom Collins, Margarita, Tequila Sunrise, White Lady...they were all there, faint echoes of a more stylish past.

The past lay dead me everywhere I went in Saigon. We stayed in the Majestic Hotel on the river front where I had watched the final disintegration of the South Vietnamese regime in 1975. As people desperately scrambled to board the ships moored along the quay, I saw one family hoisting their possessions up over the side, including an aged grandmother who was passed from hand to hand like a paper parcel.

Now the Majestic is all marble and polished brass, and a smartly dressed Vietnamese girl plays very passable Scott Joplin on the piano at breakfast.

The street that runs up to the Continental from the Majestic, once the most famous street in Indochina, called Rue Catim by the French, then Tu Do by the South Vietnamese, and now Dong Khoi by the Communists, used to hum with girls being selling an insipid but costly concoction called Saigon tea. "You buy me one Saigon tea," they would hiss, nestling up against you, trying to work out how many dollars you were good for.

The Liberty, where we dined one night, reminded me of the girls bars, although there was no Saigon tea, only Black Label and Napa Valley Red, and two



mini-skirted chameleons Robert Mondavi Cabernet Sauvignon called Stockbridge, and are delicious prawns and crab; the seafood in Vietnam is still excellent.

The streets are even more frenetic than they used to be, swarming with motorbikes and scooters, all see-sawing alarmingly from lane to lane, and criss-crossing apparently at random, while the drivers and sometimes as many as three passengers weave their way precariously between lorries, buses and cyclists.

The cyclists, often schoolgirls, are the most elegant, usually clad in the national costume, the tight-fitting sheath-like ao dai (pronounced *ow dai*) which makes every Vietnamese girl look like a model. Although banned by the Communists from 1975 to 1986, the ao dai

has made a spectacular comeback, and is now the official school uniform for girls.

In the Giac Lam Pagoda in Cholon, Saigon's huge Chinatown, I was reminded that 60 percent of all Vietnamese are Buddhist, and that Buddhism will probably exert a more lasting influence on the Vietnamese than Marxism. We stood in the incense-sweet dusk of the temple, listening to a venerable bonze sounding his prayer gong and recalling that the Buddhists were mainly responsible for bringing about the downfall of the dictator, President Diem, in 1963.

Diem and his brother took refuge in a catholic church in Cholon, and were assassinated shortly after surrendering to the coup leaders. Strange that such a gentle religion could precipitate such a bloody outcome.

As we were about to leave the pagoda, we heard a soft, continuous chattering. "What's that," Pam asked, looking rather alarmed. "Birds," someone said.

"In a cage, over there." We finally spotted them, a score of tiny finches crammed in a cage that was far too small. As our British sense of fair play rose up in indignation, a Vietnamese hovering discreetly in the background came forward and explained, partly in dumb show, that the birds were there to be released, in propitiation of the spirits. "Very soon," he smiled consolingly, "birds fly away." We all left feeling much happier.

Dalat, our next stop after Saigon, is like an Alpine time capsule, cocooned in groves of pines, the air bright and fragrant. To the eye, it has changed little since the days of the French, and the summer palace of Bao Dai, the last Vietnamese Emperor, still alive and living in Paris, has been preserved as a museum. As art deco curiosity, it looks as if the French had skimped on the budget, permitting only basic furniture and fittings. But I did like the big balcony outside Bao Dai's bedroom, which the Emperor used, as the guide put it, for "moonwatching and breeze-getting."

Bao Dai liked shooting tigers too, and did his best to exterminate the species, still plentiful in the 1940s and 1950s, but now found only in Vietnam's biggest

wildlife reserve, the Yok Don National Park, north-west of Dalat on the Cambodian border.

But it was the old Imperial capital of Hue which held the most poignant memories for me. Built on the Perfume River, so-called because of the scent of the blossoms drifting on its placid waters, Hue was for 150 years the home of the Vietnamese emperors. In 1968, during the Tet Offensive, the Citadel was occupied by the North Vietnamese army, until the Americans sent in the Marines.

There was heavy fighting, and much destruction. Miraculously, the Thai Hoa Palace of Supreme Harmony was spared. I remember visiting it only a few hours after the Marines had



recaptured the Citadel and hoisted the Stars and Stripes. Although the ground was littered with the debris of war, the palace was still intact.

Now it has been returned to its former glory. Of the 80 iron-wood columns which supported the roof of the Throne Room, only two had to be replaced. Seventy-eight of the original columns have been restored and repainted with 13 coats of red and gold lacquer, which took six months to dry. Twenty-nine years later, with the memories of that battle no more than a faint echo, the Palace of Supreme Harmony has recovered its ancient calm.

Death of the Salaryman

By Michio Nakamoto

THE SALARYMAN. The man in the blue synthetic suit. The selfless, salary *samurai* whose office efforts were dedicated to the causes of company and country, whose family name was proudly placed second to that of Mitsui, Sumitomo and Mitsubishi.

The rustless cog in the machine that dragged the country from deprivation to domination in four decades. The almost perfect employee whose eternal devotion was reciprocated by company and borrowed by the makers of western management manuals. The "model worker" of capitalist realism and a national hero.

Even at its peak, the corporate cult of the salaryman was unglamorous. Every morning, dressed in a non-descript two-piece, perhaps bought at a nondescript retailer called Tanka-O, and clutching a worn-leather briefcase, the harried salaryman could be seen walking briskly or pedalling his bicycle to the nearest train station in Greater Suburbia, Japan.

The ride into town was an hour-long journey of guaranteed, clammy claustrophobia in a carriage smelling of too much hair grease and yesterday's sake. The reward for the journey was a seat at a long desk with built-in hierarchy.

The superior salaryman, the section chief, whose job you craved, sat to the left and lorded over you in the same way that you lorded over the more junior colleague on your right. The burden was carried into the bar after work, where deference hardly dissipated after three drinks.

But even for those aware that the prestige came with pain, there were social certainties that doubled as the pillars of personality. Throughout the golden era of Japanese economic growth, the salaryman knew that as long as he worked as hard as the next man, and didn't leave the office too early, his job was rock-solid secure, his income would rise inevitably with seniority, and his living standard would improve, and his identity was clearly and perpetually defined.

Tomita was worn out. For some time, it had become hardsome to talk or play with his children. Nor could he keep his wife company... "how many more years do I have to live like this?" The Baby Boom Generation, Taichi Sakaiya.

The salaryman is still sitting by the window, contemplating the clock, watching for executive movements in the corridor, while the world is passing him by. Japan has risen, inspired by a paranoia in the US and Europe, and peaked. Japanese companies, like their western counterparts, are up against hungry, low-rent competitors in east Asia. The economic fundamentals are not favourable and lifetime employment is an unaffordable luxury.

More disturbing is the turn of the social tide. The salaryman is now a figure of fun, not a role model. The honour and glory of total devotion is seen as almost mindless mediocrity. He is a misfit. Perceptions have been changing gradually over the past decade, but the salaryman superstar can be pronounced dead. If he were a warrior, he would have already committed seppuku.

There were early signs in the mid-1980s. In the satirical film, *Congratulatory Speech* (Shukujii), Ryosuke Saitome is a living portrait of supreme dedication, but his unspectacular achievements are challenged when, one day, he is asked to give a speech at the wedding of the vice president's son, an honour far beyond the abilities he has haplessly cultivated. Day and night he frets, trying to devise a clever speech that will please and not offend his superiors.

After much hard work and worry, Saitome comes across the perfect anecdote. But, just before he is scheduled to deliver his speech, his immediate boss tells him the

same story he had so carefully prepared. The cruel turn of events leaves him crestfallen, humiliated and speechless.

"The Japanese have worked very hard throughout the postwar years, the economy has grown to a certain extent and stable prices and Japan is supposedly an affluent and comfortable place to live, but for salarymen in their 30s and 40s, we cannot feel that affluence," says a report put together by bright young businessmen belonging to the Keizai Dooyukai (the Association of Executives) who call themselves the Group 94 after the year in which they felt compelled to convene.

The Group 94 is designing a new model of

enough rewards to go around, and that even if they reaped rewards, personal satisfaction was not guaranteed.

Sixty percent of families own their own home and virtually all have a television or two, but Akio Morita, the Sony founder, has conceded that the country's employees have been overworked and underpaid.

For a growing number of workers in their 40s and 50s, there is no longer the promise of an easier life to compensate for the hardships endured in youth. Business leaders, management consultants and academics are telling the salaryman to be self-reliant and to pursue his own goals rather than those of the company. A couple of years ago the government formally suggested that Japan become a "lifestyle superpower." It was not the way he was brought up.

There are many people among the baby-boomers who are highly motivated and extremely hard-working. But there are also many people who leave the company because they feel they don't fit in," says Yoshinori Takada, manager of the planning and administration department in the plant engineering division at Mitsui Engineering and Shipbuilding.

But where do you go at 46, after 24 dutiful years at Yamaha or Kawasaki? Do you start a company? How do you win the respect that was promised and denied? Television comedians, the great social arbiters in Japan, make clear that you are a buffoon, lacking in social skills and comfortable only in the company of your desk. Even *pachinko*, the addictive pinball game of the masses, has turned trendy and away from the salaryman.

Even at home, the salaryman is increasingly uncomfortable. Teenage daughters, fashionably obsessive about cleanliness and physical attractiveness, refuse to walk side-by-side with them for fear of being seen by friends. In the office, young women workers, manicured and conditioned, scowl at the dandruff flakes, the paunch, the clothes and the bad breath.

He is targeted in embarrassing train advertisements encouraging him to buy a wig and mouth wash, and to treat malodorous socks with a new antiseptic formula.

The problem is more than a mid-life crisis for the average urban male. The country's self-image was built around two worker and the white-collar professional. The word salaryman, *salaryman* in Japanese, surfaced in the Taisho period (1912-1926) to distinguish this emerging, administrative class, easy to ridicule because of the more civilised, thoroughly modern work environment.

The perceived need was for enthusiastic, but not necessarily individualistic, employees able to pursue the national goal of rapid economic growth. But having reached Number Two, and realised that, soon enough, China will push it back to Number Three, Japan no longer has economic development as its sole reason for being. The historic mission of this century is over. The national faith has fragmented into new sects and superstitions, among which was Aum Shinrikyo, the cult responsible for the subway gas poisoning of the last year.

The Salaryman Movement has always been short on spirituality. The corporate badge was proof of devotion, and the after-work alcohol was the almost daily blessing of the lifestyle.

Now, personal development is the approved goal. There are signs that the blue suit is gradually being swapped for shades of green and brown, the hair is seeing more shampoo, the brows are louder and the holidays are a few days longer.

Having died his corporate death after a century of toil, evidence is accumulating that Japan's salaryman is getting a life.



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AROUND TOWN

Sounds of Paraguay thrill Inter-Con

The next time you have the urge to snap your fingers and tap your feet to a vivacious Latin beat, just swing by the Hotel Inter-Continental Jordan. Flown in especially for entertainment in the Bahamas Terrace, the duo creates a relaxing and enjoyable atmosphere. Renowned in top hotels in Switzerland, the duo is a musical experience that should not be missed. Currently, the Paraguayan duo can be heard in different outlets. During the summer, they can be found in the Bahamas Terrace.



Freddy for Music

A musical feat at RCC

By Anca de Maio
Special to The Star

The third annual 'Freddy for Music' recital held last Sunday at the Royal Cultural Center was a pleasant and constructive event that surprised the public with its original conception and large variety of styles. This year it has been the instructors of the 'Freddy for Music' school that stepped onto the stage to perform before their students and their families.

The recital comprised solo interpretations of classical music by Chopin, Ravel, Debussy, Sviridov, Albeniz, etc., and pop and jazz bands, that. This was under the rainbow of the light effects provided by Marwan Abu Jabr's team. Modern pieces by Jean-Michel Jarre, Gershwin, Clayderman, were played by Travellian Sako (piano teacher) and Robert Michel (guitar teacher). A duet, piano and violin by Shahla Haddad and Oksana Musleh prepared the transition between the two acts of the show just before the intermission.

"We have decided to change the roles this time and to give the teachers the chance to play in front of a large audience," Freddy Daoud, the director of the school said. "Among the 17 instructors of the school there were few that had not performed in the presence of such a large public. It has been a challenge for them to introduce themselves this way and an honour for us to show the excellent and qualified team

that tutor the 450 students of our school," he continued.

According to Mr Daoud, the repertoire of this recital has brought together classical and modern pieces so as to satisfy a wide palette of tastes and especially to attract teenagers' interest in music. "Let us not forget that the youth represent 65 percent of the population of Jordan," he said. "The fact that such a big number of adolescents could come tonight, despite being all in full exam session, proves that they do love the music we teach them."

Real fans of the classical guitar 'magician,' Robert Michel, the Jordanian teenagers dream of playing one day like him. "Many of them would like to play just rock or metal music, but I personally teach advanced classical guitar and flamenco only," Mr Michel said.

"Piano, violin, guitar, drum, brass and wind instruments classes are given to beginners, intermediate and advanced students in our school," Mr Daoud added. After two years of initiation for kindergarten children, students take an entrance exam to the first grade. At the end of the eighth grade, students receive a worldwide recognized diploma on the basis of a final exam evaluated in England, he explained.

The 'Freddy for Music' criteria of teacher-recruiting are talent, teaching experience and open character. "In our opinion two fundamental elements make a good teacher: combining the fun of playing an instrument with visible



Teachers at the helm: Now it's their turn to play

progress," underlined Mr Daoud. "It is very rewarding for us as well as for the parents to see how their children improve constantly," Ms Mary Daoud said.

A wonderful example of amazingly quick progress is Dina Ghazzawi aged 8. The only student participant in Sunday's musical evening, the talented girl started to take piano courses at the 'Freddy for Music' school just four months ago. Her convincing interpretation and perfect synchronization with the rest of the band charmed the public to the great satisfaction of her instructor Mr Sako.

"The students' recital this year will take place in October," Mr Daoud declared. "Thus our students will have the opportunity to show the skills they have developed since they entered our school to a larger audience than that of our monthly workshops. "It is a yearly event that he considers necessary and complementary to the students' micro recitals given every month at school, in the presence of their parents and teachers, and followed by comments upon their interpretation, training difficulties and achievements."

Shahin wins Cannes film festival award

EGYPTIAN DIRECTOR Youssef Shahin wins the much coveted 50th anniversary trophy of the Cannes Festival for International Cinema for his latest film "Al Masir" (Fate).

Shahin is a well respected film director who has produced many films from the 1950's onwards. His films, which won great respect among Arab audiences, are based on social realism and lately has provided a critique of religious fundamentalism.



Aga Khan Award seeks the best for Muslim architecture

THE AGA Khan Award for Architecture announced the appointment of its 1998 Master Jury. The Award recognizes outstanding achievements in architecture in all the different cultures and environments where Muslim communities have a significant presence. The award prize fund of \$500,000—the world's largest and most prestigious architectural prize—is attributed by the independent Master Jury appointed for each three-year cycle. Procedures leading to the 1998 Award were begun during 1996, and the current cycle marks the twentieth anniversary since the Award was founded in 1977.

Members of the 1998 Award Master Jury are: Professor Mohammed Arkoun, Historian of Islamic Thought in the Sorbonne; Ms Zaha Hadid, an architect in London; Mr Arif Hassan, an architect and planner from Karachi; Dr Saleh Al Hashimi, an architect and planner from Riyadh; Mr Arata Isozaki, an architect in Tokyo; Professor Fredric Jameson, a cultural theorist from Duke University, USA; Mr Romi Khosla, an architect and economist, New Delhi; Mr Yusef Sa'adya, an Architectural Historian, Jakarta; Mr Dogan Tekeli, an architect, in Istanbul.

The rigorous documentation and review procedures established by the Award require three meetings of the jury, in October 1997 and in February and June 1998, leading to the announcement of the Award winners at a ceremony to be held during the third quarter of 1998.

For the current cycle, eligible projects must have been completed and in use since 1 January 1996, and should be intended for use primarily by Muslims. All categories of building are eligible for consideration, including social and community efforts, restoration and re-use, and a full range of contemporary, environmental, and industrial initiatives.

Over 60 projects located throughout the Muslim world and in the West have received awards in the past, including well-known masterpieces as well as projects not previously publicized. Among the previous winning projects are the Institute du Monde Arabe in Paris, the Conservation of Bukhara, Uzbekistan, the Re-forestation of the Middle East Technical University in Ankara, the Regional Hospital in Kaedi, Mauritania, the Great Mosque and City Centre Re-development of Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and Kampung Improvement Programmes in Jakarta, Surabaya, and Yogyakarta, Indonesia. A retrospective exhibition

entitled *Architecture for a Changing World* is now circulating at venues throughout the world and features all of the award projects from 1977 through 1995.

Following the pattern established during the past Award cycle, the Award has facilitated the enrollment procedures to ensure a wide spectrum of project candidates. Application may be made directly to the Award office in Geneva, though all projects must then pass the scrutiny of an initial, confidential nomination process before being documented.

Beyond the individual winning projects, the Award is conceived as an ongoing process and in important forum for the debate and exchange of ideas. Accordingly, each Master Jury comprises not only architects, but also scholars, historians, social scientists, and representatives of a wide range of disciplines affecting the built environment. For the first time, in 1995, the deliberations of the jury were made public, and published in the cyclical Award monograph entitled *Architecture Beyond Architecture* (Academy Editions, London, 1995).

For more information contact the Aga Khan Award for Architecture, PO Box 2049, 1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland

Inter-Continental Jordan welcomes a new executive chef

BE ON the look out for a variety of new tastes with Inter-Continental Jordan's new Executive Chef, Rolf Bremner. A native of Germany, Bremner graduated his apprenticeship at Restaurant Stauder-Zentral in Essen, Germany. Bremner has participated in many culinary contests at Cornell University, Canada, and the Caribbean. Prior to coming to Jordan, Bremner worked as the executive chef in Hotel Melia and World Trade Center in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Musical education could be a next step in public schools

LAST TUESDAY, 13 May Minister of Education and Higher Education, Dr Munther Al Masri, presented certificates to the participants in the Music Education Workshop for music education teachers. The workshop was held at the National Music Conservatory (NMC) Noor Al Hussein Foundation from 11 to 13 May 1997 in cooperation with Goethe Institute Amman.

Dr Masri said that three elements are needed for the Ministry of Education to adopt music related activities. The first is the availability of educational material which is currently being prepared by the NMC. The second is trained music instructors which the NMC could play a role in preparing. The third element is the infrastructure, the Minister added.

Dr Al Masri pointed out that music has become a basic requirement at government schools, emphasizing the need to discover and support talents and exceptional musicians.

Director of the NMC, Mr Kifah Fakhouri, said that holding this workshop comes within the context of the preparations being made for implementing the Music curriculum at all schools which the NMC is preparing its learning materials (student book, teacher manual

and classroom cassettes) as commissioned by the Ministry of Education.

Mr Fakhouri stressed the importance of obtaining the accreditation of the Ministry of Education for NMC students so that it could parallel the basic and secondary school years as.

Director of the Goethe Institute Amman, Dr Wolfgang Ule also spoke during the presentation. Dr Ule thanked the NMC for their cooperation and expressed desire to further such activities that provide a platform for dialogue and cultural interaction between Jordan and Germany.

The workshop was supervised by the German music expert Dr Werner Freitag and was attended by music teachers from the Ministry of Social Development, SOS, Queen Alia Fund, New English School, Transalta College, Al Ahlia School For Girls, Amman Academy, Bishop School and Orthodox School.

Also attending the presentation were Chairperson of NMC's Committee, Mrs Hind Sheriff Nasser, Cultural Attache at the German Embassy in Amman, Ms Ingrid Liedgens and principals of schools and other institutions taking.

Lebanese tourism visit proves a success



A LARGE Lebanese tourist delegation have arrived in Amman on Saturday on a three-day familiarization visit to the Kingdom. The visit, organized by Taybet Zaman Hotel and Resort—a Jordanian Tourism Investments (JTI) project, the Amman Forte Grand Hotel and East Med and sponsored by Royal Jordanian, aims to promote Jordan in the Lebanese market and enhance the cooperation between the tourism sectors in both countries.

The delegation met the Minister of Tourism Akel Belait, members of Royal Jordanian executive team, officials for the Jordan Tourism Board and JTI's management.

An extensive program was arranged to give the guests an insight into Jordan's historic and tourism sites.

Emphasizing the private sector's role in promoting Jordan's tourism potential, Mr. Suleiman Tarazi, marketing and development manager at JTI, said that "these activities are part of JTI's efforts and commitment to enhance the private sector efforts in promoting Jordan both regionally and internationally."

THE FAR SIDE

By GARY LARSON



"OK, boys — that'll be enough. We don't allow any gunplay in this town."



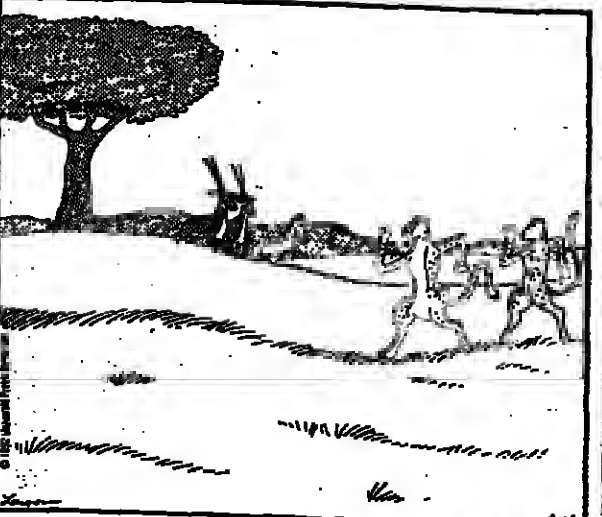
Animal horoscopes



"Uh-oh... Looks like the usual airplane food."



The Angel of Migraines



Alert, but far from panicked, the herbivores studied the sudden arrival of two cheetah speedwalkers.

Le Jourdain

Supplément en français du Star

SELON

Le discours

prononcé par le souverain hachémite voilà huit jours a été qualifié par l'opinion publique de franc et direct. Au cours de celui-ci, certaines questions épineuses de politique intérieure ont en effet été abordées, le roi entrant notamment dans le débat de la loi électorale.

Le roi a expliqué pourquoi le nombre de sièges attribués aux différentes circonscriptions n'était pas défini en fonction du nombre d'habitants. Selon lui, il est tout d'abord nécessaire d'assurer une représentation équilibrée de Jordanie. Il a ensuite mis l'accent sur l'existence d'une « mince ligne » qu'il est nécessaire de respecter en ce qui concerne la question palestinienne.

Autrement dit, cela signifie que si les zones à forte concentration palestinienne, telles que Amman ou Zarka, ne jouissent pas d'une représentation parlementaire équilibrée à l'instar des autres régions, c'est parce que cela pourrait porter préjudice à la cause des réfugiés.

Pour beaucoup d'observateurs, cette inégalité dans la représentation parlementaire entre les différentes circonscriptions est considérée comme une politique discriminatoire envers les Palestiniens. C'est pourquoi le discours royal, tout en insistant sur la préservation de l'unité nationale et l'égalité civique entre les citoyens, s'est efforcé d'expliquer qu'il s'agissait d'une contrainte politique émanant du royaume hachémite du droit au retour des Palestiniens.

Or, bien que les forces politiques et sociales soient prêtes à prendre en considération l'interprétation donnée par le roi, elles ne sont pas partiales du système électoral « une personne-une voix » imposé en 1993, et aspirent à un autre système électoral qui puisse favoriser une meilleure participation de la population.

Plusieurs ateliers de réflexion ont tenté de dessiner un système électoral plus représentatif. Ils ont abouti à une formule mixte alliant scrutin de liste et scrutin uninominal. De même, le Centre d'études stratégiques de l'Université de Jordanie a récemment formulé à l'aide d'experts européens de nouvelles propositions qui, tout en conservant le système électoral en vigueur, représentent une formule mixte.

Malheureusement, toutes ces propositions n'ont trouvé aucun écho auprès du gouvernement de M. Abdel Salam Majali qui a pratiquement bloqué la voie à tout changement en profondeur de la loi électorale, et, par conséquent, de la vie politique. Et il est très décevant pour tous les Jordaniens de législatives régies par une loi que tout le monde rejette.

Hussain Abu-Rumman

Le Jourdain, on y revient.
Tous les jeudis dans le Star
645 380

Président du syndicat des ingénieurs, le plus influent de Jordanie, Laith Chbeilat a siégé à la chambre des députés de 1989 à 1992. Un siège qu'il ne briguera pas lors des prochaines élections législatives, car il est opposé au système de suffrage « une personne-une voix ». Politiquement, Laith Chbeilat se définit comme un islamiste indépendant. « Mes principes sont islamiques, et comme je les observe strictement, c'est une garantie pour les autres que je les aime et qu'ils peuvent avoir confiance en moi », confie Laith Chbeilat. Ce qu'il reproche aux autres partis d'opposition, c'est d'être de ne pas assez respecter les principes dictés par l'Islam. Il leur reproche aussi de ne pas discuter assez des vrais problèmes. « J'aimerais que l'opposition pose les problèmes qui concernent le peuple. Par exemple, le droit de jouir d'une plus grande liberté en ayant un gouvernement plus représentatif. Malheureusement, la plupart de mes collègues de l'opposition islamiste et nationaliste ne prennent pas la responsabilité d'aborder la question d'un changement de système politique, à savoir une monarchie constitutionnelle qui représente mieux le peuple. Si l'on donnait au Parlement la place qui lui revient et que le Premier ministre était choisi d'après le suffrage populaire, la situation actuelle serait corrigée. Donner plus de pouvoir au Premier ministre est une mesure légale et constitutionnelle et je trouve étrange que personne n'ose en parler ouvertement. Pourtant, beaucoup de gens partagent mon opinion ».

Au cours des dernières années, Laith Chbeilat a déjà été emprisonné, puis gracié, par deux fois. En 1992, il était condamné à vingt ans de prison

pour sédition, bénéficiant d'une amnistie générale quelques mois plus tard. Quatre ans plus tard, en novembre 1996, Sa majesté le roi Hussein lui offrit le pardon royal pour un délit de lèse-majesté, après qu'il ait purgé sept mois d'une peine de prison de trois ans. L'attendant en prison, Laith Chbeilat a sa sortie de prison pour le ramener dans sa famille reste une image forte gravée dans toutes les mémoires. « Je ne suis pas opposé ou roi », confie l'ex-prisonnier. « C'est une personne qui mérite le respect. D'ailleurs, dans la tradition musulmane, on ne critique pas les personnes mais leurs opinions et leurs actes. Or, j'ai le droit, en tant qu'être humain, d'avoir une opinion différente de celle du roi. » Dans une lettre adressée au Premier ministre de l'époque, le roi Hussein expliquait sa décision de pardonner Laith Chbeilat en l'honneur de la famille Chbeilat, et en particulier en l'honneur de son père que le roi appelait son oncle, et en celui de son frère, le sénateur Gaith Chbeilat.

Ce pardon au nom de la famille peut ressembler à une sorte de faveur envers « le moulin noir » de la famille. « Pas du tout », s'insurge Laith Chbeilat. « Mon père était connu pour avoir des opinions bien plus chères et sa langue était plus acérée que la mienne. Il ne conspirait pas secrètement et

M.Eran revient sur sa décision et à Amman

«Après avoir donné sa démission le 13 mai dernier, alors qu'il n'était en poste en Jordanie que depuis quelques jours, l'Ambassadeur israélien Oded Eran a finalement annoncé mardi qu'il revenait sur sa décision, le chef de la diplomatie israélienne David Levy (notre photo) l'ayant convaincu de réintégrer son poste.

«Comme le ministre m'a assuré que je pourrais remplir mon rôle de façon efficace, j'ai décidé de réintégrer mon poste et de retourner à Amman dans deux ou trois jours», a affirmé mardi M.Eran à la télévision publique.

M.Eran avait démissionné le 13 mai pour protester contre le fait de ne pas avoir été informé d'une rencontre secrète entre le roi Hussein et le Premier ministre israélien Benjamin Netanyahu. Les deux dirigeants s'étaient rencontrés pour tenter de résoudre un différend qui oppose les deux pays à propos du partage des eaux prévu dans le traité de paix.

Mardi, M.Eran a expliqué qu'il avait voulu « lancer un avertissement afin d'améliorer la coordination dans la fonction publique, surtout quand il s'agit d'une question aussi délicate que le dossier jordanien ».



Airline

Laith Chbeilat

«Je crie pour le peuple»

Ancien député, Laith Chbeilat est l'une des figures les plus populaires de l'opposition en Jordanie. Opposé au système électoral «une personne-une voix» retenu pour les élections législatives, il ne se présentera pas en novembre prochain.



Voilà une dizaine de jours, Laith Chbeilat participait à une campagne de soutien en faveur d'Ahmad Dakamseh.

disait tout haut ce qu'il pensait. Je me considère comme l'héritier de cette tradition familiale ».

Depuis sa libération, Laith Chbeilat a appelé à de nombreuses reprises son opposition à la normalisation, notamment en janvier dernier lors de l'organisation de la foire commerciale jordanienne-israélienne. Plus récemment, il a affiché son soutien au soldat jordanien Ahmad Dakamseh, responsable de la mort de sept lycéennes israéliennes en mars dernier à Bakoura. «Le peuple ne peut pas crier, alors moi je crie», explique Laith Chbeilat. «Nous (ndlr: le comité de défense) soutenons Dakamseh parce que par son acte, il a exprimé une opinion. Une opinion opposée à celle du gouvernement. D'autre part, ce qui nous pousse à prendre sa défense, c'est la façon dont il a été traité. On le traite de criminel

avant même de le juger, et on a même demandé à ses camarades pourquoi ils ne l'avaient pas tué. Regardez en Israël, par exemple, l'assassin de Rabin a été considéré comme un suspect normal jusqu'à ce qu'il ait été reconnu coupable par un tribunal ».

Beaucoup s'interrogent en Jordanie sur les raisons de la popularité politique de cet ingénieur. «Je ne suis pas plus brillant qu'un autre. Mais j'ai plus de courage», explique Laith Chbeilat. «J'ose dire ce que beaucoup pensent tout bas parce que je suis prêt à en payer le prix. Et je sais que le prix peut être la prison ou l'assassinat. Mais quand la situation aura changé et que tout le monde aura la liberté d'exprimer ouvertement, je deviendrai monsieur tout-le-monde ».

Claudine Assad

Hommage

Adib Abbassi écrit le mot de la fin

Le 10 mai, Adib Abbassi disparaissait. Cet écrivain jordanien avait choisi depuis un demi-siècle de vivre en ermite, loin des institutions qu'il ne supportait pas. Il laisse derrière lui de nombreux manuscrits, n'ayant publié qu'un seul ouvrage de son vivant.

Le siècle venait de débiter lorsque Adib Abbassi est né, 1905 paraissait être l'année de tous les dangers pour ce nouveau-né, la pression ottomane au sud de la Syrie étant à son comble. Une situation qui a donné à cet enfant du village chrétien d'Al Housn, aux portes d'Irbid, de bonnes raisons d'haïr tous les systèmes et autorités de toute sorte tout au long de sa vie.

A seize ans, il publiait ses premiers articles politiques dans des magazines spécialisés installés au Caire. Les Égyptiens auraient été surpris de découvrir que celui qui osait contredire les plus grands penseurs n'avait pas vingt ans. A cette époque, il se trouvait à Jérusalem, à l'école de formation des instituteurs.

En 1929, sa réputation est déjà grande alors qu'il termine

des études de sciences politiques à l'Université américaine de Beyrouth. De la ville la plus en vogue du Moyen-Orient, Adib Abbassi garde des amitiés fortes avec poètes et philosophes. Il aimait polémique avec l'intellectuel du monde arabe. A cette époque, peu de gens savaient que ce théoricien et analyste politique était aussi un poète.

Ses œuvres et manuscrits se trouvent aujourd'hui rassemblés dans sa maison familiale de Housn. Ce musée contient plus de 100 manuscrits, et bien sûr, le seul livre qu'Adib Abbassi a publié de son vivant. *Le retour de Loukman*. Loukman était le philosophe qui portait le titre de sage à la cour du roi des Indes.

On peut découvrir dans ce musée les onze volumes non publiés qui accompagnaient ce

livre majestueux, ainsi que des écrits sur la Palestine et un essai de sciences sociales. Des dizaines de recueils de poèmes, quelques traductions de l'anglais, et un livre étrange sur Hitler, sa vie et sa destinée, faisaient aussi partie de l'univers familial de l'écrivain.

Appartenant à une famille de notables, Adib Abbassi n'a jamais pu supporter les institutions, et notamment l'administration alors qu'il enseignait à Salt, Jérusalem ou Kénak. Il a quitté d'ailleurs l'enseignement à cause des tensions qui existaient entre lui et le ministère de l'Éducation.

Depuis le début des années 40, Adib Abbassi n'a plus publié un seul livre. La presse égyptienne se demandait alors «si le grand penseur de la nation arabe était mort». Pendant un demi-siècle, il a en effet

choisi de vivre en ermite. Bien qu'elle soit difficile à résumer, la vie d'Adib Abbassi peut être comparée à celle d'un anachorète. Les témoignages de clercs et de curés qui l'ont bien connu disent de lui qu'il était aigreur et intelligent, amoureux et célibataire, digne et généreux, anti-américain, anti-nazi et anti-israélien.

Un des derniers actes de sa vie, après avoir légué sa fortune aux œuvres de bienfaisance, a été d'entamer une grève de la faim contre la politique de colonisation israélienne de Abou Ghneim. Il avait aussi préparé le premier acte après sa mort en offrant sa corne à des malades souffrant de troubles de la vue. Et peut-être que les patients qui ont retrouvé la vue grâce à lui voient aujourd'hui le monde à sa façon.

Ahmad N'Sour

C'est la vie

L'agenda français d'Amman

Cinéma

Fin du cycle consacré au réalisateur Jean-Jacques Annaud.
Le 26 mai à 20h30 au CCCL, L'ours (1988).

Spectacle

Mime et Tysme. Spectacle de mime tout public, accessible à tous les âges, sans barrière de langue. Cinq représentations sont prévues dans le pays:

- le 22 mai à 20h00 à Amman (Centre culturel royal)
- le 23 mai à 20h00 à Amman (Collège de la Salle)
- le 24 mai à 20h00 à Irbid (Université du Yarmouk)
- le 25 mai à 20h00 à Amman (jardins du roi Abdallah)
- le 27 mai à 20h00 à Aqaba (citadelle)

Exposition

L'artiste Guy Ferrer expose ses œuvres au CCCL à partir du 26 mai.



Adib Abbassi

Jordanie

La presse perd son capital

Avec l'adoption d'un nouveau code de la presse imposant des conditions financières très strictes aux journaux, beaucoup d'hebdomadaires devraient être contraints de fermer dans les semaines qui viennent.

En adoptant cette

semaine une nouvelle loi sur la presse, le gouvernement a annulé d'un coup tous ses efforts de libéralisation de la presse déployés ces dernières années. Cette nouvelle loi, critiquée par de nombreuses personnalités publiques et tous les syndicats professionnels du pays, a en effet mis la crédibilité du gouvernement en doute en ce qui concerne sa volonté de libérer les médias.

En fait, le gouvernement a pris la décision de contrôler la presse jordanienne au nom de la préservation des mœurs publiques. Les journaux ne pourront plus publier aucune information, analyse, commentaire ou caricature portant atteinte à l'unité nationale, la sécurité du pays, la famille royale, la religion, la monnaie, les bonnes mœurs, les dirigeants du pays et les États voisins.

En cas de violation de cette loi, des amendes très lourdes, jusqu'à 25.000 dinars, peuvent être imposées, alors qu'elle n'excédait pas 6000 dinars auparavant. De plus, les journaux condamnés peuvent être suspendus, le ministre de l'Information étant le seul habilité à autoriser ou non la reprise de la publication. Ce nouveau code de la presse exclut par contre toute peine de prison à l'encontre des journalistes.

A ce stade, le contenu de la loi n'est pas connu. Les conditions financières particulièrement difficiles à remplir pour la plupart des journaux jordanien, et essentiellement la presse hebdomadaire, un capital de 600.000 JD est exigé pour le lancement d'un quotidien, contre 50.000 dinars auparavant.

Une somme que les quatre grands quotidiens jordanien devraient réunir sans difficulté. Irbid comme le tout nouveau quotidien Al-Arab-al-Yom qui a vu le jour samedi dernier et qui dispose d'un capital d'environ 8 millions de dinars.



Les représentants de plusieurs hebdomadaires tenaient dimanche une réunion pour protester contre cette loi.

Pour la vingtaine d'hebdomadaires qui à vu le jour ces dernières années, la tâche risque par contre d'être beaucoup plus difficile puisqu'ils disposent de trois mois pour augmenter leur capital de 2000%, de 15.000 JD à 300.000 JD.

Les médias dans leur ensemble se montrent aujourd'hui très inquiets après l'annonce de cette décision gouvernementale qui vise à éliminer une presse hebdomadaire accusée de manquer de professionnalisme. S'il est vrai que cette presse a parfois dépassé les limites en publiant des informations à sensation, il ne faut pas oublier que beaucoup de journalistes ont été incarcérés ou jugés pour leurs actes depuis la proclamation de la loi sur la presse de 1993. 62 procès ont été intentés par le gouvernement depuis 1993, dont cinq contre des quotidiens.

Les réactions ont été rapides après l'annonce de cette loi, le conseil du syndicat des journalistes jordanien (SJJ) ayant dans un premier temps annoncé sa démission avant d'essayer d'engager des négociations avec le gouvernement. Un syn-

dicat qui est soutenu par les 12 autres associations professionnelles du pays qui ont menacé de démissionner en bloc si la loi était maintenue.

Pour manifester leur mécontentement, environ 80 journalistes ont tenté mardi d'organiser un sit-in de protestation devant les bureaux du Premier ministre. Mais arguant du fait que les manifestants n'avaient pas demandé d'autorisation pour organiser cette manifestation, les autorités jordaniennes ont procédé à l'interpellation temporaire d'une dizaine de journalistes, plusieurs journalistes ayant été blessés au cours de la dispersion de la manifestation.

Ammonçant à la suite de cette manifestation que le gouvernement n'avait aucune intention de changer quoique ce soit dans cette nouvelle loi, le ministre d'Etat à l'Information Samir Mutaweh laisse peu de chances aux négociations que demande le président du SJJ Seif El Sherif. Les membres du SJJ se sont eux déjà donnés rendez-vous le 6 juin pour discuter de cette nouvelle réglementation.

Le Jourdain

Egypte

Alexandrie sauvée des eaux

Le phare d'Alexandrie, l'une de sept merveilles du monde, ainsi que des ruines de son palais royal, renaissent des eaux grâce aux fouilles entreprises par deux archéologues français.

A l'image de Rome,

Athènes ou Byzance, Alexandrie n'est pas seulement une cité prestigieuse: elle est aussi le lieu où s'est développée une civilisation. D'où l'attention que lui portent nombre de chercheurs à l'effet de témoignages de son passé. Et ce d'autant plus qu'il s'avère que ses vestiges sont ensevelis sous les eaux.

Fondée par Alexandre le Grand en 322 av. J.C., la ville déclina à la fin de l'Empire romain. Pour mieux signifier son lien avec la seule Antiquité, tremblements de terre et glissements de terrain avaient relégué au fond des mers ses plus beaux quartiers et ce, semblait-il, pour l'éternité.

La partie antique d'Alexandrie est située dans une zone militaire interdite aux étrangers et aux fouilles. Un film, décrivant des ingénieurs du port occupés à recouvrir les ruines de la cité d'une chape de béton, suscita une vague de remous dans l'opinion. Les autorités égyptiennes reconstruisent alors leurs positions et choisissent une mission française pour engager des fouilles sous-marines. Deux archéologues français, Jean-Yves Empereur, spécialiste de la période hellénistique au Centre national de la recherche scientifique, et Franck Goddio, financier converti dans l'exploitation sous-marine, se lancèrent dans l'aventure.

Durant trois années, de 1993 à 1996, ils entreprirent, chacun dans un secteur géographique particulier, de gratter, de photographier, d'inventorier, de sauvegarder de l'eau toutes les traces architecturales. Les archéologues et leurs plongeurs sont aidés par des moyens logistiques et techniques impres-



Un plongeur remonte à la surface un des trésors de la cité d'Alexandrie.

sionnants. La fondation Elf participe activement, le CEA (Commissariat à l'Energie atomique) met à disposition des magnétomètres pour repérer la position des objets. Les chercheurs sont alors face à face avec «un site» que Jean-Yves Empereur qualifie de «grandiose et féérique». Parmi les plus spectaculaires spécimens de cette période archéologique, d'énormes blocs de pierre de taille, dont certains de plus de 75 tonnes, trouvés autour du fort de Qayt Bay, se révélèrent être des pans entiers du phare d'Alexandrie. Engrêé en 285 av. J.C., ce phare devait être entouré de sanctuaires, peut-être même précédés d'une allée monumentale comme le laisse supposer la découverte de sphinx, de statues, de stèles taillées de hiéroglyphes. Au cours de l'été 1996, Franck Goddio met lui à jour les restes du Palais royal où Cléopâtre séduisit

César et aime Marc-Antoine. Certaines pièces vont enrichir le musée gréco-romain d'Alexandrie.

Avec ces découvertes resurgissent les heures fastes de la ville décrite par des historiens grecs tels Strabon ou Polybe. L'Alexandrie de Ptolémée, l'historien général, successeur d'Alexandre qui donna son nom à la dynastie des Ptolémées. Point stratégique pour la conquête de l'Égypte, place commerciale, Alexandrie tira, par ailleurs son rayonnement intellectuel et artistique de sa célèbre bibliothèque, disparue dans les flammes.

Les éléments du Palais Royal mis à jour, associés à d'autres vestiges, permettront, à l'avenir, de composer la topographie de la cité royale ainsi que son organisation.

Inès Sommariva

Restrictions on press freedom do not stop with new law

Other laws such as the Penal Code exist to curb freedom of expression

AMMAN (Star)—Amendments to the 1993 Press and Publications Law were ratified by a Royal Decree, last Saturday.

Article 24/A orders daily newspapers to increase capital from JD 50,000 to JD 600,000. Section B of same article orders other publications and weeklies to increase their capital from JD 15,000 to JD 300,000. Both must do so within three months.

Article 13/B requires chief editors to have at least 10 years experience.

Amendments ended the daily's hope of reducing government control. They cancelled the article to vest the government of its equity in *Ad-Dustour* and *Al-Rai*.

The new law allows the government to maintain, through the Social Security Corp., and the Jordan Investment Corp., a controlling interest of 62 percent in *Al-Rai* and 32 percent equity in *Ad-Dustour*.

Law now cancels imprisonment for violations. Article 50/H gives courts the right to cease any newspaper that is convicted of violating Articles 40 and 42, and gives [informa-

tion] minister the right to allow the republication after paying the fines.

Fines and offences under Articles 40 and 42 (publishing of pending court proceedings) which originally did not exceed JD 1,000, and fines for offences under Article 44 did not exceed JD 6,000.

Amendments concerning these articles now have a minimum fine of JD 15,000 and a maximum of JD 25,000.

Article 40 of the Press and Publications Law forbids publication of news, views, opinions, analysis, information, reports, caricatures, photos or any sort that disparages any of the following:

■ Which offends the King and the Royal Family;

■ Information about the Jordanian Armed Forces and security forces, unless it is permitted either by the concerned authority or by a government official;

■ Materials which show contempt for any religion recognized by the Constitution;

■ Articles which damage national unity, or encourage racism, or foment hatred, discord and disharmony among

members of society;

■ Government documents of a confidential nature;

■ Minutes of closed sessions of Parliament;

■ Information which is intended to shake confidence in the national currency;

■ Information which contains a personal insult to the Heads of State of Arab, Islamic or friendly countries or that harms Jordanian relations with other countries;

■ Which offend the dignity or personal freedoms of individuals or damage their reputation;

■ Which are contrary to public morals and ethics;

■ Which includes false news or rumors that offend public interests or state departments.

Other laws that restrict the freedom of the press:

■ The Penal Code contains additional provisions which restrict freedom of expression and carry harsh penalties.

■ External Security of the State.

Article 118 of the Code protects the external security of the

state by punishing with imprisonment for at least five years, "anyone who, by writing or speech not authorized by the government, exposes the Kingdom to the danger of hostile actions, disturbs its relations with foreign states, or exposes Jordanians to physical or material retaliation."

"Anyone who provokes incitement within the Kingdom, or any Jordanian who provokes incitement inside or outside the Kingdom by writing or speech may be sentenced to a prison term not exceeding two years and a fine of no more than JD 30" (Article 122).

The definition of incitement includes humiliation of a foreign country, its dignity, its flag, or its national anthem. Article 122 also prohibits the insult or humiliation of a head of state, its ministers, or its political representatives in the Kingdom and specifies that truth is not a defence to charges under this provision.

■ Dissemination of false news. The deliberate dissemination of false or exaggerated information outside the country which attacks state dignity may be punished with a prison sen-

tence of not less than six months and a fine of not more than JD 50. If the false or exaggerated news concerns the King, his successor, or the guardian of the throne, he or she may be sentenced to no less than one year's imprisonment (Article 132).

■ Defamation. Innuendo and Affronts against Public Officials. The Penal Code defines defamation as "the imputation of a specific fault to a person, in a sceptical or interrogative manner, in such a way as to detract from his honour and dignity or expose him to hatred and contempt, regardless of whether the said fault constitutes a punishable offence" (Article 188).

Innuendo is defined as "an attack on the dignity, honour or standing of another person, in a sceptical or interrogative manner, without specifying a particular fault" (Article 189). An affront is "any contemptuous insinuation or invective, other than defamation and innuendo, which is directed against the victim by word of mouth in his presence, by way of abuse, in writing or graphic form that is not made public, in

a telegraphic or telephone communication or by callous treatment" (Article 190).

Public officials are entitled to enhanced protection under the Code. Defamation is "punishable by imprisonment for a term of three months to two years if it is directed against the National Assembly (Parliament) or its members in the course of their work, or if it is directed against an official body, a court of law, a public institution, the army or any public servant in the discharge of his functions or as a result of action taken by virtue thereof" (Article 191). Innuendo is "punishable by imprisonment for a term of one to six months or a fine of JD 10-50 if it is directed against any of the bodies or persons mentioned in Article 191" (Article 193). Affront is "punishable by imprisonment for a term of two weeks in six months and/or a fine of JD 5-30 if it is directed against a public servant in the discharge of his functions or as a result of action taken in his official capacity."

If the public servant is a person "vested with public authority," the penalty is enhanced and the perpetrator may be imprisoned for up to one year (Article 196).

The Law on State Secrets and Classified Documents

The Law on State Secrets and Classified Documents prohibits civil servants from making public any classified information under four categories: "ordinary," "restricted," "secret" and "top secret."

A letter from the publisher

JORDANIAN JOURNALISTS have rejected the new press and publication law passed unilaterally by the government earlier this week. The Council of the Press Association has submitted its resignation, but later suspended it, in protest and the heads of other professional unions have also threatened to resign en masse by Saturday if the government does not withdraw its controversial law.

Opposition parties have also come out to denounce the amendments introduced by the government to the 1993 law, which until last week, was seen as the most liberal press law in the Arab world and an indication of Jordan's vibrant democratic process introduced in the early 1990s.

Apart from the numerous flaws in the new law, which are seen as a major setback to freedom of expression in Jordan, the manner with which the government has passed the law, without consulting the Press Association or the deputies, reflects a drastic retreat by the government from the democratic process.

Such a process enshrines the basic fundamentals of freedom of expression as a constitutional right for every Jordanian, pluralism and the separation of powers.

Such a change in government mentality is sending the wrong signal to Jordanians and to the world.

The press has come under fire in recent weeks for its treatment of many issues; from national unity to peace with Israel, and from the economic woes of the country to official corruption. In addition to this some newspapers, especially among the Arabic weeklies, have been accused, justly on many occasions, for their irresponsible, sensational and non-credible coverage of public issues. It is no secret that the main casualty of the new law will be the weekly press. Most may have their licences revoked.

While the government may have a case against the way some tabloids have abused their freedom under the 1993 law, the government's choice of remedy is unjustified and will do more harm than good to press freedom and to the image of Jordan as a beacon of democracy in this region.

The new law has condemned all Jordanian journalists—the majority of whom are bound by the ethics and principles of their profession. It has dealt a blow to all members of the profession regardless of their credibility and intentions. It has confiscated their right to report freely and responsibly on government—a most sacred tenet in any thriving and healthy democracy.

This paper is among Jordan's oldest weeklies. Being a weekly newspaper it now finds itself threatened by the new law, which requires us to re-register itself as JD 300,000 establishment. We were never considered, nor do we consider ourselves, as a sensational and irresponsible newspaper that has abused its freedom. And yet the new law has passed a heavy sentence on us.

There is much more at stake here than closing down a few rogue weeklies. Silencing the weeklies, *The Star* included, will not serve democracy, nor will it advance and protect freedom of the press in Jordan.

We have always believed in responsible dialogue and in the sanctity of our constitution and laws. Both are now being undermined by arbitrary legislation and political myopia.

Turning Aqaba into a free zone could prove an expensive task, experts argue

Continued from page 1

the agreement repayment was delayed to June 2000.

Lately, the United States had disclosed that it plans to offer loans to Jordan worth \$100 million, however no further details were available on the utilization of these loans.

Since the last Amman Economic Summit (MENA), Jordanians have been anticipating concrete steps to carry out some of the big infrastructural projects that were discussed. But until last week none of

the projects was implemented.

The head of the Aqaba municipality, Dr Riyadh Al Hilu described the decision to transform Aqaba into a free zone as positive. However, he added that this puts us in real competition with neighboring countries in the fields of transport, tourism and investments. "We should be strong and qualified enough to face such a competition," he said.

He added that to develop Aqaba along the lines of the free zones of Port Said in

Egypt and Jebel Ali in Dubai requires careful and serious planning, bearing in mind the various economic, geographic and demographic aspects.

"This means that a sound infrastructure should be there and investors have to be provided with all facilities and incentives to choose Aqaba as a center for their business and trade," Al Hilu said.

The transformation of Aqaba into a free zone is an ambitious project that will certainly encourage industrial exports, create employment opportunities, reduce pressure on the balance of payment, help transfer advanced technology, and revive the national economy. The project should boost the tourism sector, attract foreign investments and facilitate regional cooperation in various fields of development.

However, financing this huge project remains the problem.

Military prosecutor charges Dakamseh with premeditated murder

Continued from page 1

he allegedly threatened them with his gun and proceeded to shoot at the girls until his gun jammed and his colleagues were able to control him. He was taken to a control tower but while members of the unit were busy evacuating the victims he managed to escape and commandeered a military vehicle and headed for the attack site and tried to run down an Israeli man who was injured in his leg. He was finally restrained.

Now that the indictment sheet has been presented, a trial date will be set, expected to take place as soon as next week. If convicted Dakamseh faces the death penalty. His lawyer Ahmad Najdawi has asked Arab lawyers to join him in the defense of his client. The defense will insist that this was not premeditated

and will try to prove that Dakamseh had not planned the attack but was provoked by his victims and acted at the spur of the moment.

Charges of selling land

Continued from page 1

From the earliest days of Zionism, when Jews and Arabs began their contest for the lands of Palestine, both sides infused private ownership of land with religious resonance and implications of national sovereignty.

Zionist purchases were known as "redeeming the land," and "there was a consensus that land, once bought, should not pass from Jewish to Arab hands," said Anita Shapira, professor of Zionism at Tel Aviv University.

Better organized and financed, ultimately triumphant in founding their state, the Zionists devised formal and informal mechanisms to prevent Arabs from acquiring Jewish land that persist today.

Palestinians, the weaker party, turned to violence. A 1994 study of Palestinian slayings of collaborators with Israel by the human rights group B'tselem found that land dealers were thought to be "the worst type," "heretics and religious rebels."

The return of the issue in Palestinian debate began with the groundbreaking in March for a new Jewish neighborhood in East Jerusalem on land bought years ago from Arabs by Jews. Another factor was a series of covert land deals by extremist Jewish groups, culminating in the expansion this month of the Merkaz Harav yeshiva—a messianic bulwark of the settler

movement whose patron advocates expulsion of Arabs from the West Bank—on East Jerusalem's Mount of Olives.

The Palestinian cabinet, meeting May 2, directed "judicial and security circles" to halt such land sales. Three days later, Justice Minister Fehi Abu Medeen said the self-rule authority would put "anyone who sells even a centimeter on swift trial and ... seek the death penalty against them."

He spoke approvingly of occasions in the intifada when "people who sold land to Israelis were shot as traitors."

That is approximately what appeared to happen next. Farid Bashiti, 70, an East Jerusalem land dealer widely reputed to be a broker for Jewish land purchases from Arabs, was found bludgeoned to death on May 9 in Palestinian-ruled Ramallah, his hands bound behind him. Israeli police alleged he was lured there by a young woman working for the Palestinian Authority and killed by Palestinian police lawyer Nasser Anani, both of whom are in Israeli custody with their cases under seal, a common Israeli practice.

After Bashiti's body was found, Abu Medeen continued to make what Human Rights Watch/Middle East, in a letter to Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, described as "outrageous statements" that appeared to condone "outright murder" of land dealers.

Journalists united

Continued from page 1

Sharif said the general assembly of the JPA will be called for an extraordinary meeting on 6 June to discuss the new law which was passed without prior consultation with his association. He also said the JPA has managed to convince presidents of other professional unions to suspend their decision to resign on Saturday if the government does not withdraw the new law.

JPA has now opted to establish a quiet dialogue with the government rather than resort to extreme measures. It hopes to convince the government to review some of the amended articles which journalists find undemocratic and threatening to press freedom. JPA will also file a legal suit against the new law at the Higher Court of Justice.

JPA's decision to open dialogue came one day after a peaceful sit-in in front of the Prime Ministry ended in violence with riot police using force to disperse some 60 Jordanian journalists. At least four were injured and 10 were arrested. They were later released.

The government announced Tuesday that it had no intention to withdraw the law. Minister of State for Information Affairs Dr Samir Mutawa said only an elected parliament can approve or reject the law. He said no special session of parliament will be called before the November elections.

"There isn't any evidence," said Sheikh Munir Nabulsi, who heads the Ein Yabroud mosque and presided over the funeral. "It is very possible that this man was falsely accused." On the other hand, Nabulsi said, "if they find he really was guilty of selling land, whoever killed him will not be found because he will (turn out to) be from the Authority."

"No one knows where he is buried," Mohammed Bashiti, the dead man's son, said Monday. "I want my father to rest in peace."

Here in Ein Yabroud, a Ramallah suburb 12 miles north of Jerusalem, Abu Sarah, the more recent casualty, was buried with Koranic verse in a village graveyard packed with neighbors and friends. That was a strong indication of disbelief in allegations raised in the newspaper al-Ayyam that the dead man had been suspected of "selling lands to Israelis."

"There isn't any evidence," said Sheikh Munir Nabulsi, who heads the Ein Yabroud mosque and presided over the funeral. "It is very possible that this man was falsely accused." On the other hand, Nabulsi said, "if they find he really was guilty of selling land, whoever killed him will not be found because he will (turn out to) be from the Authority."

JORDAN ELECTRIC POWER

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JORDAN PHOSPHATE MINES CO. LTD

INVITATION for Pre-qualification of Vendors for Corporate Planning and Computerization Project Tender No. 23/F97

Jordan Phosphate Mines Co. Ltd. (JPMC) invites local and/or international companies specialized in the computer industry to apply for Pre-qualification to implement the Corporate Planning and Computerization Project at JPMC Head Quarters and all other Sites. Application for Pre-qualification will be considered only for specialized computer companies, which are suitably qualified for this type of work and with high knowledge in Management Information System (MIS).

The pre-qualification document submitted shall include details of experience and past performances on similar projects, the capability of the vendor and with respect to personnel and financial position. Application for Pre-qualification will be issued against non-refundable payment of JD300 and will be available at JPMC Head Quarters / Supply Department. The closing date for purchasing the Pre-qualification document is 12:00 HRS local time Thursday the 5th of June 1997.

A presentation will be conducted at JPMC Head Quarters in Amman at 10:00 HRS Local Time Monday the 9th of June 1997, to answer all queries regarding the Pre-qualification document.

The closing date for submission of applications is 12:00 HRS Local time Thursday 26th of June 1997.

Samah Madani
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THE STAR'S WORKSTATION COMPUTING & HIGH TECH

Edited by Zeid Nasser

The new system for Top Level Domains Restructuring the Internet

By Jawad Abbassi
Special to The Star

WE IN Jordan are familiar with restructuring. After all, the country's economy has been implementing a structural adjustment program set by the IMF for more than 8 years now. As it appears, restructuring is not just confined to the fields of economy and commerce, but can extend to other sectors and areas.

The Internet, or rather the way its domains are registered, is set to be restructured as a successful three-day meeting in Geneva—hosted by the International Telecommunication Union and attended by major players on the Internet scene—was concluded with the signing of a historic Memorandum of Understanding.

The memorandum will introduce competition into the lucrative market for registration of generic Internet top level domains by adopting the new system developed by the International Ad Hoc Committee—whose job was to study the current domain registration system—a few months ago. Prior to the memo and the new explicit pledge to implement it, the domain structure of the Internet revolved around the three generic top level domains of ".com", ".org" and ".net". Registration under these generic top level domains was exclusively handled by the US-

based Network Solutions Inc. (NSI) through its division, the NIC. NSI has an exclusive agreement with the US National Science Foundation—the body that had conducted most of the work in setting the Internet's Standards—that

to the "gTLD-MoU", there will be seven new generic top level domains in order to cope with the great and growing demand for Internet addresses. These seven new TLDs are "firm" (for business), "store" (for shops), "web" (for WWW related organizations), "rec" (for recreation companies), "info" (for information services) and "nom" (for individual web sites). More importantly, the NSI's registration monopoly will end and an initial number of 28 new registrars will be set up around the world (four from each in seven world regions) and the door will be open for new registrars as the need arises.



expires in March 1998. In addition to the generic Top Level Domains, by far the most utilized, the Internet has four restricted domains of ".mil" (for the US Military), ".gov" (for the US government), ".edu" (for US Educational institutions) and ".int" (for treaty organizations) in addition to the occasionally-based top level domains which follow the ISO country codes (from ".af" for Afghanistan to ".zw" for Zimbabwe).

The memorandum, specifically named "gTLD-MoU", set up a self-governing structure and established policies and procedures for responsible administration of the Internet domain name space. According

Computer & IT companies

Arabic Macintosh applications deliver user needs

MACINTOSH USERS in the Arab World have long complained of the relatively small collection of Arabic software available for their favorite computer.

However, let the truth be told, there are leading Arabic applications in practically every field of use.

Leading software publishers worldwide, such as Microsoft, Adobe and Claris do supply the necessary productivity applications for the Macintosh.

Adding to these the reasonable number of Arabic Mac applications produced by Arab software developers, it seems that most Macintosh user needs are covered.

An interesting round-up of all Arabic Macintosh applications available, published by *BYTE Middle East* magazine at the end of 1996, brings together all the categories of software. For the benefit of *The Star*

readers, many of whom are Macintosh users, here is a list of these applications:

Wordprocessing:

- Wintext from WinSoft
- Alef from Zeine Technological Applications
- Nissim from MegaMind
- World Write & Simple Text from Apple
- Desktop Publishing
- Al Nasher Al Sahafi from Diwan
- Page Maker Middle East from Adobe (Arabized by WinSoft)
- Arabic XT from Layout Ltd (Arabization of QuarkXPress)
- Oryx from Lino-type Hill Database applications:
- 4D First from ACI
- FileMaker Pro from Claris Graphics:
- Adobe PhotoShop from Adobe (Arabized by WinSoft)

Adobe Illustrator from Adobe (Arabized by WinSoft)

Accounting:

- Al Motarrem from Microtech
- Delta Mac from Delta Software
- Al Mobaseb Al Mithali from IdealSoft
- Dictionaries:
- Abjad Hawaz from InfoArab
- Kalemat from InfoArab Educational Software:
- Engineering Notebook from MegaMind
- School Management System from Jersey Tech
- Course Builder from Pac Mac School
- Internet software:
- CyberDog from Apple
- Productivity software:
- Time Management Tools from IdealSoft
- Power Agenda from Apple

News update

HP Introduces Mmx Versions Of Pavilion Range

Hewlett-Packard have announced that its Pavilion range of Pentium PCs includes 200MHz processors that utilize MMX technology.

Pentium MMX processors perform much better than standard Pentium processors, especially in handling multimedia functions like full-motion

video and advanced sound. Users can feel the difference in most graphical applications and even on the Internet.

To demonstrate the effect, Hewlett-Packard have included MMX-optimized applications bundled with the HP Pavilion. These include Easy Photo from Storm Technology and Adobe PhotoDeluxe. For more information, contact Scientific & Medical Supplies Co. (SMS) on telephone 624907.

Get Arabic Microsoft Office 97, for less

Microsoft Middle East is introducing an attractive offer to users across the region.

Users who purchase copies of Arabic Microsoft Office 95 now, will be eligible for receiving a rebate of \$225 (or \$205 for the standard version) when upgrading to Microsoft Office 97. In other words, the upgrade path for these users, when Microsoft Office 97 is Arabized, will be cheaper. The Arabic version of Microsoft Office 95 is still the only suite of Arabic 32-bit applications, so it makes sense to purchase the package if you are a serious Windows 95 user.

After all, what's the point of all Windows 95 new features if you don't run optimized applications.

16x CD-ROM, from Techmedia

TECHMEDIA HAVE announced a 16-speed CD-ROM drive, called 16X Max, this drive offers a maximum of 2,400 KiloByte per second data transfer rate, and is compatible with all leading multimedia standards. This is great news for multimedia fans, still, 16x speed CD-ROM drives, or even faster drives, Techmedia claim to be the best. 16 speed CD-ROM, for who are announcing it Techmedia CD-ROMs, contact AMMCO, phone 606889.

INTERFACE

BY ZEID NASSER

Will we ever experience this? Buy a PC 'off the page'

IF YOU are a frequent reader of American and European computer magazines, then you will have noticed the huge number of computer brands advertised, along with phrases like "call us now and have your Pentium PC delivered to your doorstep." These are offers made by some of the largest computer firms such as Gateway 2000, Dell and Micron and 10—

if not hundreds—of others. Owing to this sales strategy, they have been called "Direct Sales" companies, and their success lies in exactly that.

Because these companies sell their PCs direct from the page of a magazine, to the consumer and eliminating the middle-men which are retail shops, distributors and dealers, the prices are much lower.

It's only logical. Take out the profit margin of the computer shop or distributor, and go directly to the manufacturer and you are probably going to receive up to 20 percent less in the pricing. Of course, it doesn't necessarily have to be off the page of a magazine. You can call them up after receiving a brochure by mail, or seeing a billboard advertisement in the street. The point is that these manufacturers reach out to you, the consumer, directly, and take utmost care in providing quality service and prompt delivery.

So why isn't this technique applied in the Middle East?

Well, for one thing, we don't have manufacturers based in the countries of the region. In other words, every computer that enters the country has been already ordered by a distributor or retailer.

Attempts to break away from this tight situation have been made by companies like Acer and AST who opened manufacturing facilities in Dubai's Jebel Ali Free Zone. There, these manufacturers receive the "raw" components for their computers and assemble them in the United Arab Emirates for export to regional markets. By doing so, they exercise much better control on the pricing structure. However, these efforts haven't provided massive price decreases, only moderate ones which can be rivalled by cheap unknown brands.

But getting back to the "direct sales" channel, there is more to it than just price. It doesn't even have to be "direct" from the manufacturer. Computer warehouses and mail-order stores are also a good idea, even if they are middlemen, because they still have very low costs and can give you great deals. It also offers comfort of ordering and receiving your order, delivered to your home, office or wherever else you want. Sometimes delivery is by mail, if items are simple like software packages or regular peripherals (modems, sound cards, etc.). However, when it comes to personal computer systems, you get special delivery.

A Middle Eastern company is trying to pioneer the idea of this "virtual mail order store". Direct Access, based in Dubai, provides a long list of computer products for buyers. These are compiled in an attractive brochure that is mailed direct to customers all over the Middle East, including people in Jordan. Browsing through the Direct Access catalogue you will see all the hardware and software you may need, whether for IBM PC or Macintosh. Prices are similar to those you get locally, but there is something special about being able to order items not available in Jordan at all. Actually, I haven't received Direct Access for a while, I wonder if that is a sign of a slowdown in their business. For the sake of the Middle Eastern computer customer, I hope that efforts like Direct Access are sustained or re-emerge.

It is actually a very good idea to start a "one-stop" shop for computer products in Jordan, which isn't really a shop, but more of a direct delivery service. Jordanian computer buyers are changing. They are no longer the sophisticated, computer experts. The mainstream wishes to shop easily, and effectively for computers and related items. Maybe it is time somebody answered the call.

Theories abound over Cantona's sudden exit

PREDICTABLY, THE enigma of Eric Cantona's departure from Old Trafford Monday even in the absence of the departed icon. As supporters laid flowers and scarves at the ground, in a surreal, funeral commemoration of his passing, conspiracy theories abounded about his underlying motives in announcing his retirement.

As Cantona himself might say, the truth has many faces. There were suggestions that all was not as it seemed when Manchester United revealed the news to the world on Sunday. Already, the French media has been gripped by suggestions that their countryman was forced out of England because of a new over a new contract. There were also hints that the retired forward has not, in fact, put away his boots for the final time.

In France, there is indignation about Cantona's departure from Old Trafford. *Le Soir* has reported a suggestion by Jean Jacques Bertrand, the player's lawyer, that a refusal by the club's board to extend the remaining year of Cantona's contract led to the decision to retire. The argument, also lent credence by some United supporters, goes that the decision was a financial one inspired by the club that runs Manchester United.

It is a suggestion that is refuted adamantly by Martin Edwards, the United chairman and chief executive, who has gripped weary of the allegations since constantly at the public company. "I really feel I shouldn't get involved in any argument, because there is nothing for me to defend," he said, "but this kind of thing is absolute nonsense. There has been no row over contract discussions, because we have not had any talks with Eric at all."

If Cantona, who is 31 this week, was not forced to leave Old Trafford because of a lack of appreciation of his talents, then there is an alternative theory that suggests he has retired with the long-term aim of resurfacing elsewhere. The France international retired once before, when he left Nimes, but returned to football when he joined Leeds United in 1991.

Bernard Ferrer, his brother-in-law, is a midfielder player with Marseilles, Cantona's hometown club and the team with which many people felt he would one day have ended his career. "Six years in England have drained Eric and I think he was weary of that," Ferrer said, "but I think he still wants to play football. He needs a rest, but he could return after that."



Cantona

United, but yesterday a club official said that there were no plans to bring their former player back.

There was, however, another hint that Cantona's playing days are not over. He has a contract with Nike, the American sportswear firm, and it suggested yesterday that it would be standing by the player and intended to use him in the future.

If the speculation over Cantona's departure reached intense proportions, then it was equally fierce over the identity of the man who is likely to replace the Frenchman. Manchester United have expressed a strong interest in Juninho and are likely to table a formal bid for the Brazilian this week. Already, they have made strong overtures and have made contact with Middlesbrough, his club, in order to obtain permission to speak to the player.

Juninho flew to Brazil on Sunday for a holiday, but his father, Oswaldo, remained at the family home on Teesside to conduct negotiations. Liverpool, Arsenal and Newcastle United are among the English clubs vying for the player's signature, but yesterday it became clear that Spain is still his favored destination.

Oswaldo was in talks with officials from Atletico Madrid, who flew to Middlesbrough yesterday to open negotiations with the club. Should Juninho be given permission to speak to the Spanish side, then his father will fly to Madrid on Friday to continue talks over a contract. Juninho is thought to be worth in the region of 40,000 pounds a week.

Butt says there's life at United after Cantona

LONDON—Nicky Butt said Tuesday that Manchester United's young team had no reason to fear the future despite the sudden retirement of Eric Cantona, the club's inspirational captain.

United's 22-year-old midfielder, one of several young stars in United's squad, admitted he was "shocked" when he heard the news that Cantona had quit.

"I was driving home on Sunday when it came on the car radio—I couldn't believe it," said Butt. "All through his time with United he's shocked us with his football and his skill. Now he's shocked us with his departure."

But Butt, hoping to win a place in the England team against South Africa on Saturday, insists the Premiership champions will go from strength to strength without the mercurial Frenchman.

"Eric has been an inspirational figure, somebody we all looked up to and

admired," said Butt. "He was always so confident in his ability and made us believe in our own ability. He's been a great player and a great friend and of course he'll be sadly missed."

"But you can go back over the years. The same thing was said about Bryan Robson and Mark Hughes. Sooner or later everybody is going to go and new players will come. That's part and parcel of the game."

Some have already suggested that United post-Cantona will not be the same side that has won four Premier League titles and two FA Cups while Cantona graced the club.

Butt disagrees, insisting: "I fully believe we'll go on winning titles without him."

"We're good enough and we're young enough. We've got a great squad. Most of us have played in Europe for the past three seasons and have got better and better for that."

"If we do buy somebody to replace

Eric it'll be a world-class player so we're nothing to be scared of."

"People have said we're too young but we're all 22 now. We're not kids any more—people have played in the World Cup finals at 22."

"We've got to put that behind us and put faith on our shoulders to see if we can carry on. We're looking forward to proving a few people wrong."

Butt believes Cantona will be back at Old Trafford soon, but only as a spectator.

He added: "I'm sure we'll see him again at Old Trafford. He'll come and watch us maybe and we'll say something to him then."

"But he didn't want to let anybody know in advance. He wanted everybody to find out at the same time, and he was right."

"The fans have liked him just as much as we have and I don't see why he should've told us first that he was going to do what he's done. What he did was only fair."

Jordan's still the true MVP

SPORTS AWARDS get more ridiculous every year. You've got the Heisman Trophy, which always goes to some overhyped guy or some overhyped college. You've got baseball's MVP award, which is now just an excuse for baseball writers to snub Albert Belle. You've got all those coach-of-the-year awards that inevitably go to the clown who led his team to a third-place finish after a fourth-place finish the year before.

And you have the NBA Most Valuable Player award, which they decided to give to someone other than Michael Jordan.

Understand, Michael Jordan is always the NBA's Most Valuable Player. Always. Nobody else is in the photograph. If Michael Jordan played for the Boston Celtics, they would be the best team in the NBA. If Michael Jordan played for the Kansas Jayhawks, they would be the best team in the NBA. If Michael Jordan played for Kansas State... OK, let's not get carried away.

Jordan is the best offensive player, the best defensive player, the best competitor on the floor. He's the most gifted, most intelligent, most incredible player in the world. He's the best to ever play this game, maybe the best to ever play any game, end of discussion, end of story, exclamation point.

The NBA bestowed its MVP award upon Karl Malone.

The league then declared Thomas Dewey the 34th president of the United States. Look, no offense to Karl Malone, who had a great year and has put together a Hall of Fame career, but this is like picking Tony Bennett over Frank Sinatra, like picking Jackie Chan over Bruce Lee, like picking Damon Wayans over Richard Pryor. One is fine. The other is legend.

Obviously, people just felt like it was Malone's turn. This is a big thing in sports. Everybody gets an award eventually. It's like the sports version of the Irving G. Thalberg lifetime achievement award. In the 1990s, they have given the MVP award to Charles Barkley, Hakeem Olajuwon, David Robinson and now Malone.

All of those guys are fine players.

None of those guys is nearly as good as Jordan.

Do we need to go over this again? It's amazing. Jordan is the most hyped athlete of our time,

and he's still underrated. He does miracles every night. It's like people forget. Nobody in sports wins like Jordan. His Bulls won 72 games a year ago, 69 this year. In his last four full seasons, the Bulls have won championships. No team has even forced a game seven against Jordan's Bulls since 1992.

Nobody scores like Jordan. Take away the two seasons either ruined or diminished by that baseball side-



Jordan

show, and he has led the league in scoring every year since he was 23 years old. He averages more points per game than anybody ever. In the playoffs, he scores more.

Nobody defends like Jordan. He's second in NBA history in steals per game, behind Alvin Robertson, and he blocks more shots than any guard who ever played. He has been on eight NBA All-

Defensive teams. More than all of that, he just plain Jordan covering them.

But doesn't everybody already know all this stuff? His career has been on prime-time television. Jordan was a high-flying scorer as a kid, then the best all-around player of his time before baseball stole him away. Now he's just a winner nothing else, a guy who hits breathtaking, fadeaway jump shots and shuts down opponents and drives himself and his team as hard as necessary to win games.

Nobody else is more valuable. Nobody can possibly be more valuable. Hey, Karl Malone's a great guy, good scorer, fine rebounder, wooden power forward, but would you want him as a Jordan taking the last shot? Would you want him as a Jordan if your team trailed by five with a minute left? Would you want him or Jordan defending the other team's best guy? Plainly simply, would you want him or Jordan?

In the end, awards get more stupid all the time. The end, awards don't matter much. Jordan will be remembered as the best of his time, the best of all time, but it's still hard to believe how many times Jordan has been overlooked. He has won four MVP awards, which is a lot. But he has been the best player every year for 10 years. This year, the voters decided to give the MVP trophy to Karl Malone. Jordan, again, will have to settle for the championship trophy.